The Australian
WOMEN'S WEEKLY

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JULY 14, 1954

PRICE 9d

Fashions, News, Features

FOR TEENAGERS

How to plan a trip abroad

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The Australian WOMEN'S WEEKLY

JULY 14, 1954 — Vol. 22, No. 7

JOLLY MONTH OF JULY

JULY is a month notable for anniversaries that are celebrated as milestones of human freedom.

July 4 marks American Independence Day, July 14 the fall of the Bastille.

But July 31 is a reminder that freedom is never strictly free; that, whoever is running the show, the taxes have to be paid.

In recent years the Australian Government, with a thoughtfulness rare in governments, has softened the blow for the average wage-earner. Pay-as-you-earn taxation, devised on its current scale, mostly ensures a refund.

Furthermore, if you grab a form smartly off a post office counter and get your return in early, there's a good chance of having an early refund.

Taxation officials have announced that special staffs are already working on the first of the wage and salary returns which have been sent in for the financial year.

All this has combined to take away from July its old-time atmosphere of impending doom, when a taxpayer filled in a return and waited in terror for an assessment.

The current method, which enables the wage-earner to calculate his own tax and the likely amount of his refund, has even put a gloss on the trials of arithmetic.

The result is that the wage-earner takes an illogical pleasure in the thought of getting some of his own money back.

Sterner types reflect that the Government might go a step further and pay interest on the refunds.

This, perhaps, is too much to hope.

The ordinary wage-earner is so pleased at the thought of a lump sum of money that he doesn't bother to carp.

And this is a psychological triumph which must bring a glow of satisfaction to long-maligned taxation authorities.

Our cover:

● The lilies on our cover were grown by Mr. C. Smith, of Winston Street, Earlwood, N.S.W. Mr. Smith makes a hobby of liliums, and in the summer months he has an exceptionally fine display of them. At the top of the picture is Lilium auratum, the Golden Ray Lily of Japan. At left is L. auratum rubrum, at right L. auratum pictum, and at the bottom a Jillian Wallace hybrid. Picture by staff photographer Eric Donnelly.

This week:

● J. B. Priestley's latest book, "The Magicians," is our new serial, beginning in this issue on pages 8 and 9.

● The accent is on travel in this week's teenage section, and the interest of the information on how to plan a trip abroad (page 15) extends beyond those in their teens to anyone hoping to make a trip. Incidentally, the Youth Hostel Association has no age bar on its membership. In Australia the association has a plan to charter a ship big enough to carry 1000 members to London for a return fare of £100. If the plan eventuates members hope that the first sailing date will be in December, 1955.

Next week:

● Detective story addicts are always regretful that Dorothy Sayers has abandoned this type of fiction and let her Lord Peter Wimsey grow old in obscurity. She still stands as one of the masters of her craft, and for that reason we decided to include her "Murder Must Advertise" in our series of free novels. We are publishing it in two parts, the first half appearing next week. Of equal interest with the mystery is the picture of the setting, an advertising agency. We know a girl who works in an advertising agency who chose her career because she was so fascinated by the atmosphere of "Murder Must Advertise." She tells us that it has proved authentic so far, except for the corpse.

● Flower-arranging is a hobby within the reach of anyone who has a garden, or has friends with a garden. In next week's paper we have a five-page feature on flower arrangements, showing some beautiful examples and giving instruction and hints for amateurs.

Our Jigsaw Story Contest

Your dreams could come true if you won our £2000 Jigsaw Story Contest.

THE first prize is £1000 in cash and the other prizes amount to £1000.

Our Jigsaw Story Contest provides you with an easy way, that you will also find fascinating, to become an author overnight.

You are not required to write anything.

All the words or sentences you need have already been written for you.

We ask you to send us a "pre-fabricated" story of 350 to 500 words by piecing together extracts from The Australian Women's Weekly.

In this way you make a kind of literary jigsaw.

The issues you may use are dated from June 16 to August 4 and you may "lift" phrases, sentences, and paragraphs from any part of the paper, including advertising.

Entries close on August 25.

Letters have been received asking whether punctuation marks and capital letters may be added to phrases taken from the middle of sentences.

Extracts must be used exactly as they originally appeared. Capitals and punctuation will be assumed, where necessary.

The coupon, which must accompany your entry, will be found on page 10 of this issue.

Before you begin piecing your story together, read the rules of the contest carefully.

There is no limitation on the kind of story you may submit.

It can be a thriller, a miniature murder mystery, a love story, or a comic piece.

To avoid mutilating your copies of The Australian Women's Weekly, you may write or type the extracts, provided you add the page number and the date of issue.

THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY

HEAD OFFICE: 168 Castlereagh St., Sydney. Letters: Box 4088WW, G.P.O.

MELBOURNE OFFICE: Newspaper House, 247 Collins Street, Melbourne. Letters: Box 185C, G.P.O.

BRISBANE OFFICE: 81 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane. Letters: Box 409F, G.P.O.

ADELAIDE OFFICE: 24-26 Halifax Street, Adelaide. Letters: Box 368A, G.P.O.

PERTH OFFICE: 40 Stirling Street, Perth. Letters: Box 491G, G.P.O.

TASMANIA: Letters to Sydney address.

Contest rules

ADDRESS your entries "Jigsaw Story Contest," The Australian Women's Weekly, Box No. 7052, G.P.O., Sydney.

You may send as many entries as you wish, but each entry must be accompanied by the coupon on page 10. Use one side of the paper only.

Put your name and address in block letters at the top of each page of your entry.

Entries must be between 350 and 500 words.

Entries will not be returned to the sender, but will be destroyed when the contest ends.

The judges will award prizes according to the merits of the entries received.

No correspondence will be entered into about the judges' decisions.

Employees of Consolidated Press Ltd. and its subsidiary companies are not eligible to enter the contest. Nor are their husbands, wives, parents, children, brothers, or sisters.

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AFTERMATH

BY NORTON WEBER

ILLUSTRATED BY LASKIE

VAL woke with the feeling she had not stopped smiling all night. She stretched her arms and then her legs, buoyantly free from the sense of depression she had felt since the night Matt came back from the south.

For the first time in weeks she was glad to be awake, eager for the day instead of dreading it as an ordeal that must somehow be lived through.

She slipped out of bed and raised the window-shade. The feeling of rain in the air last night had materialised into a wet July Sunday. She smiled through the rain at the Bennetts' big white house next door; only yesterday she had not been able to look at Matt's home without having the heaviness inside her come alive in a way that hurt all through her.

"Well—awake at last!"

Val turned, at her younger sister's voice, and saw Chris in the doorway, looking, at the moment, older than fifteen in the full-skirted housecoat she had managed to wheedle out of her father.

Val beamed at her, thinking that when Chris heard the news her recently assumed poise would vanish in a blur of running legs as she tore downstairs to spread the glad tidings.

"Just spying," Chris said. "If your ladyship is up for the day, we'll wait breakfast a bit. If not, you can eat later."

"Oh, I'm up—and hungry as a bear!" Val's smile became a grin as her sister's eyes widened. Her appetite had been something less than birdlike lately.

Chris sat down on the bed, her alert eyes questioning. "What goes?"

Val felt the happiness well up inside her. She had to share it. She took both of Chris' hands. "Matt's not going to marry Fay Gillian!"

Chris' mouth dropped open and Val laughed gaily. "Yipes!" Chris said. "What happened?"

Val spread her hands. "They decided it was no go. She's not coming back."

Chris grinned out the window at the Bennetts' house. "Serves him right—good and right! He thought he was so smart—" She turned quickly to Val. "How do you know?" she asked.

"Matt was here last night."

"He had the nerve to come here—after the crumby way he treated you?"

"He had the courage to admit his mistake," Val said defensively.

"Courage! Gall, I'd call it. Well, I hope you told him to peddle his papers some place else—" Chris stopped and stared. Then she said, "Val, you didn't take him back!"

Val felt her face redden. "I love him, Chris. When you're really in love you'll understand."

Chris opened her mouth impulsively, then closed it. She stared at her hands. When she looked up she was smiling, wrinkling her nose. "I just hope the big lug knows how lucky he is, that's all." She stood up. "Well, Mum says pancakes on the table in ten minutes."

Val watched Chris walk thoughtfully out of the room instead of dashing headlong to break the glad news, and some of the buoyancy went out of her. Then she shrugged and smiled. Chris was still essentially a little girl, with a little girl's intense loyalties.

She had been exuberantly enthusiastic about Val and Matt's lifelong attachment, thinking it incredibly romantic that there had never really been anyone else for either of them since those sunny afternoons years ago when they had shared a play-pen in the side yard between the two houses.

She had suffered vicariously with Val during the empty two months—their first real separation—when Matt was away getting briefed on equipment and programming against the day when permission came to add television to the radio station operated by him and his father.

Then Matt had come home (Val shuddered now, remembering that night) and told her that he had fallen in love with Fay Gillian, a girl he had met. Val's world had collapsed around her, but even in her hurt she had realised that it was a blind blow of fate for which she couldn't blame anyone.

Chris, however, had been vindictive. The pendulum of her loyalties had swung all the way, but it would rush headlong in the other direction when she saw how it really was again between Val and Matt.

Perversely, Val had not been bitter until last night when Matt came to her and asked for another chance. Then, as he stood humbly before her, all her hurt and humiliation had blazed at him.

But her fury had spent itself, and she knew that love was still there—scarred and altered by the storm it had weathered, and stronger, perhaps, because of it. "It's almost," she had said to him, "like falling in love all over again."

That wonder and warmth flowed through her again as she went downstairs. She slipped into her chair smiling, waiting for her father to wink and say something like: "Well, I don't suppose we'll be seeing much of you around the house from now on." Or her mother: "We're all happy for you, dear. You see, it worked out, after all."

She buttered her pancakes and put cream and sugar in her coffee. She began to wonder if Chris had told them the good news. She took a sip of coffee and glanced over the rim of the cup at her mother.

Mrs. Randolph smiled at her quickly. "What's this we hear?"

Val laughed. "Isn't it wonderful!"

"Of course, dear." Her mother looked down at her plate. "As long as you're sure."

"Sure? I've been sure ever since I was knee-high—" Something in her mother's

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Matt had come to Val very humbly and had begged her to give him another chance.

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RECKLESS

By ELIZABETH ALLEN

ILLUSTRATED BY MEDHURST

MARY adjusted her figure skates carefully, methodically. It was late in the season, and she wanted to enjoy the ice-rink as long as she possibly could.

There were many things she meant to enjoy. Life wasn't going to end just because Dan Pierce was going away.

She made a "patch" and began working on figure-eights. Round and round. Round once more. There would be lots of things to make her days full and interesting—and it would all be just like this, going round in little circles, the same thing over and over again.

It was Dan's fault.

Until he had come along she had been perfectly content with her lot. She had an indulgent if preoccupied father, a comfortable home which her lovely stepmother kept running with grace and charm, things which were fun to do, and even a job she liked.

People occasionally said to her, "But, darling—you should meet some nice boy." She was twenty-five. High time she was getting married.

Sometimes they even said, with a touch of playful maliciousness, "Zoe isn't stealing your boy-friends, is she?" Her stepmother was so beautiful.

But she hadn't even minded that. Daughter and stepmother were good friends. No, it was Dan who had changed things.

Oh, she was a fool! She had known all along that he would go away. He was in the city on a consulting-engineering job, and had already stayed much longer than he had planned. There was absolutely nothing to hold him here, since she could not.

It was early in the afternoon, but Mary decided she'd had enough. She changed her clothes and walked out into the bright street.

She looked up, there were pale green leaves on the dark branches above her, looking almost artificial against the fresh sky.

A restless ache and longing filled her. Spring was a time to fall in love; it was no time to say good-bye. And she had to say good-bye to Dan. Tonight. After tonight he would be gone.

If only she could have kept their relationship entirely casual, the way he apparently wanted it!

The first time they met she'd struck exactly the right note; she had walked into her father's book-littered study, that rainy April evening, wearing a yellow wool dress and carrying a branch of pussy-willow; he had looked at her and said solemnly:

"Just what I need to brighten up my life. Really, Dick,"—he'd turned to her father—"you must let me take her home with me."

"Oh, you don't want her," Dick Cartwright had said. "She's an athlete. Terribly expensive to feed, I can assure you, Dan."

"Yes I do want her," the stranger went on, crossly. "And have her wear that dress."

"The pussy-willow," Mary told him demurely, "is extra."

He hadn't taken her home with him, of course; only to a party. That was how it started.

At first he had just been someone to take her about. He was older; he had been on expeditions all over the world; he was far more interesting than boys of her own age.

She went with him to parties and concerts, and they shared a liking for sports. A big, vital-looking man with quiet eyes and a mouth which seemed never quite to stop smiling; she had thought him attractive and a good companion.

Zoe warned her not to fall in love. He had been engaged before, disastrously.

"Besides, he's older than you are, Mary. He's nearer my age than yours!"

Well, she hadn't meant to fall in love. It was just that, suddenly, the day was lost unless she saw Dan.

And Dan—was he in love with her? He never said so. She was a playmate, someone to have fun with, and he had used her laughter to erase the memory of his unfortunate engagement.

I ought to hate him, she thought now, getting into her little car. But she did not hate him.

Mary drove along to the hairdressers where she had an appointment.

She had her hair done. "Do something different with it," she told the operator listlessly, not really caring.

She went to pick up the birthday cake for Mickey, one of the orphans at the institution where she undertook part-time work.

She and Zoe always furnished cakes for the children.

"Oh," she said, stricken, to the assistant, "I forgot to tell you to make it chocolate, this child adores chocolate—"

"Your mother called in yesterday and said Mickey wanted chocolate," the woman smiled. "She remembered, from last year. What an awfully sweet voice she has!"

"Oh, I'm glad she remembered. Yes, her voice is lovely; she was trained for the stage."

People always spoke of Zoe.

She delivered the cake and hurried home. Dan was coming for a meal that night—"just a few people," the family had promised—and she must freshen up and look her best.

She intended to be very nonchalant about saying good-bye to him, however. She had been a friend, an acquaintance, nothing more.

No, that wasn't quite right, either; there had been Christmas Eve, when they had been walking slowly up the drive, joking about the perfume he had given her—"Jungle Madness," something like that—when suddenly they had both stopped laughing near the big old gum-tree and had turned towards each other and kissed.

There had been other moments, too. Oh, he had cared! It was only that he did not care enough. Perhaps he had made up his mind not to care enough.

Mary manoeuvred the car skilfully round the circular drive which led up to the big house, put it in the garage, and started up the path. She walked slowly, weighted by her own thoughts.

As she opened the front door she could hear her father and Zoe talking excitedly in the study.

"That beast of a Tolstoy," Zoe was saying. "There he has poor Varenka and that stupid man—he brings them together—you know that they'd be perfect for each other, but nothing comes of it, simply because—" She broke off. "Oh, hello, Mary!"

"Hello," said Mary. "Who is Varenka?"

"In here." Zoe waved a copy of "Anna Karenina." "It's just so unfair. I could kill Tolstoy."

"I have been waiting for Zoe to discover the Russian novelists and see what effect they'd have on her," Mary's father explained gravely. "What I did not anticipate was the effect Zoe would have on the Russian novelist. She is about to exorcise Tolstoy's ghost and then shoot him."

"I don't even remember Varenka," Mary said.

"A minor character, dear. They always interested me, because I always played them in my greasepaint days. What have you been doing with yourself to-day, Mary?"

"Oh—finished up at the institution. Had my hair done. Picked up Mickey's cake. And I was at the rink for a short while."

"Ah, me," sighed Zoe. "To have that youthful exuberance!"

Mary smiled at her. Zoe might not have exuberance, but she had everything else: deep copper hair which always seemed to have the sun on it, violet eyes, a sweet mouth.

As a little girl Mary had looked at her stepmother and prayed, "Make me like Zoe. If I could only be like Zoe! Please."

But it was a wish she held no longer. If you were plain, you could never be really beautiful. And you could certainly never achieve someone else's vivid personality.

There was not even much point in working on your looks — who would notice her beside Zoe?

She went upstairs to dress, leaving her father and stepmother in animated discussion again.

Dick Cartwright was immersed in the grinding detail of a big business all day long, and when he came home there was something about Zoe which at once stimulated and refreshed him.

Zoe, on the other hand, found in this very matter-of-fact yet erudite man the type of audience she liked best; he gave her the admiration and attention

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HEART

which she needed as much as she needed air to breathe.

Mary considered them a perfect combination.

The phone in the hall was ringing as she reached the first floor. Dan?

"Mary? Dan speaking. Thought I'd send you some flowers tonight. Our last evening, you know. . . . What would be good with whatever you're thinking of wearing?"

"Why—" He was only sending her flowers. No need to think he might have called about anything else. "Dan, how nice. I'm wearing a striped affair, I think."

"H'm. The florist may be out of striped flowers."

A joke, Mary. Laugh. Where's your usual humour?

"Anything you'd like to send would be wonderful," she said. "See you soon, Dan."

She went to her room.

It was full of Dan. There was the cup they had won together in the badminton tournament this winter; a book which was a gift from him lay on her bed-table; she had a whole shelf of symphony records they had selected and enjoyed together; a picture of them taken at a night-club, Dan looking very handsome with that touch of grey in his dark hair, was on her dressing-table, where she could constantly see it.

Dan, we could have quite a life together, you and I.

She sighed and turned to her wardrobe. The striped dress was hanging there, colorful, jaunty, the kind she always wore.

She never tried to be soft and feminine, maybe that had been a mistake from the beginning.

Now, Zoe—Abruptly she crossed the hall to Zoe's room.

Zoe had given her permission to wear any of her clothes at any time, but she never had; they were the same size but not the same type.

Now she paused before Zoe's wardrobe and selected a soft green with a trace of drapery on the skirt.

If I could only be like Zoe. Well, maybe it wouldn't hurt to try to be a little like her, after all.

She bathed and dressed.

Why, she looked, really, rather well. Her hair had been softened and shaped, and the windswept

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As Mary walked slowly down the stairs she was conscious of Dan's eyes on her as he talked to the early arrivals.

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NIGHT VIGIL

By BERYL ROGERS

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN MILLS

BETTY stood still by the window, watching. Somewhere outside in the darkness he was watching, too. Watching . . . and waiting . . .

Her knees felt shaky, and she knew that her face was white beneath its freckles. The effort of pressing against the wall to escape the barrier of darkness isolating her from everything friendly and safe had numbed her whole body.

She would not be found until morning, of course. Mother would walk in, gay as ever, then with a strangled cry start back from the stiff figure on the floor, beautiful even in death.

A figure lying with one arm outstretched as if for help, its red frock crumpled, dark hair falling over a cold face . . .

With a flash of tragic insight, Betty could see it all: her mother, kneeling in agony beside the corpse, hot tears raining down her cheeks as she gently smoothed away the soft waves and saw the serenity of her dead daughter's features.

"Betty, if only I had allowed you to go to the pictures with Bob, this would never have happened!" she would cry.

And Bob, as he tenderly placed a wreath of lilies beside the slender corpse, blaming himself bitterly the while, would vow to avenge her death.

She imagined him, grim, hardened, with only one desire in life, forsaking the Undergrads' Ball, giving up a brilliant career, searching, mercilessly, for his sweetheart's killer.

His face would grow rather like Marlon Brando's: the strong, moody sort that turned you over inside . . .

There would be the neighbors, too . . . poor Mrs. Webster. Yes, Betty was everything to her . . . oh, a beautiful girl. I always said she was not long for this world . . . she was the sweetest little thing . . .

I hear young Bob Clement has left the university and gone after the murderer. So romantic, I think . . . he won't look at a girl these days. Blames himself for Betty's death, you know.

Mrs. Webster forbade Betty to go with him to the pictures—too many late nights, she said—and Bob went off in a huff, leaving the poor child alone in the house . . .

Betty wanted to cry. It was all so beautiful. Bob, at the funeral, looking the very image of Brando. Bob, declaring before all the mourners that for him there could never be another woman . . . never . . .

"It's wonderful to know a love like this at fifteen," thought Betty.

"It's wonderful to know a love like this," Betty thought, wanting to cry as her imagination ran beautifully on and on.

She held no bitterness towards her mother, who would grow daily thinner with grief and remorse, her only comfort the assurance of a celestial reunion somewhere in the future.

A sudden wind stirred the big tree by the window and a thousand rustles broke a silence that was the heavier for the mocking tick of the clock.

If only she dared move to put on the light! But that would give away her position. He would shoot.

What a film it would make! The climax . . . she, hair flying, eyes wide in terror, springing for the light switch. The sinister face of The Man at the window—a spurt of orange flame, then her wild cry as she sank, like a wounded bird, to the carpet . . .

What was it? There was someone there!

This was the end. She must summon all her courage. Perhaps James Mason would read in a newspaper how the lovely teenager, Betty Webster, whose callous murder had shocked the world, was holding a picture of him next to her heart when she died.

Perhaps he would send a wreath, perhaps even fly to the funeral. He would stand with his profile towards the coffin and place a hand on Bob's bent head.

"I understand how you feel," he would say brokenly. "She must have been a very wonderful girl . . ."

That clock! Betty shivered, jerked back to the cold loneliness of the house, to the thought of the watcher in the garden. Tick . . . tick . . .

Perhaps she would go mad! Beautiful Betty Webster loses her reason during the ordeal of a night vigil in her home when she . . . and so on.

Cloud was thickening over a star-sprinkled sky, blotting out all light. A cold wave froze Betty's breath and her hands clenched.

Among the black tangle of garden a shadow was moving. He was coming!

Why had they left her alone here? Why had Bob gone off in a temper? That horrible clock . . . he was coming nearer . . . she would scream!

"Betty." He knew her name. It was premeditated then. The door wasn't locked, the handle was turning . . .

"Keep away from me——" she gulped, with great lack of originality.

"Oh, Bet, don't be like that. I only want to apologise."

Bob. It was Bob . . . IT WAS BOB!

Betty swept down the switch, blinking in the welcome light.

Bob, she thought savagely. He looked more like a slapstick comedian than like Marlon Brando!

"I've been worried about you, Betty," Bob was saying. "I thought you might be scared, all alone. I know you're nervy . . ."

After all she'd been through tonight—nervy! Betty fumed, then drew herself up with dignity.

"You talk the most utter rot," she said, "that I've ever heard. I don't want your company! I like a man!"

And slamming the door in his face, she went to bed.

(Copyright)

● In our first special teenage issue recently, we suggested that teenage writers might try submitting short stories to us. Here is the first one to be published in response to our suggestion. Its author is a fifteen-year-old Melbourne schoolgirl. (See further details page 21.)

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Our new serial . . . a fascinating blend of hard realism and intriguing fantasy.

The Magicians

By J. B. PRIESTLEY

IN his best chairman manner, Hathon concluded, "So there you are, gentlemen. Mr. Selby will be Managing Director, with Mr. Torr as deputy."

Now that it had happened, Ravenstreet felt no shock, not even surprise. Yet he had been sincere when he had refused to listen to Garson and young Treves, who had tried to warn him that this might happen.

His rejection had been unthinkable up to the very moment when it became a fact; now that it was here, it seemed inevitable. As if his life were a book, and somebody had turned a page.

Selby was talking now, thanking them for their confidence, pledging himself to do this and that—the usual smooth stuff. His own gang listened, all smiles. Old Hathon's enormous purple face sagged forward, as if he were more than half asleep.

Ravenstreet felt a long way off, and paid no attention to Selby until he heard his own name mentioned.

"And so I should like to propose, Mr. Chairman," said Selby, "that the Board should ask Sir Charles Ravenstreet to serve as Production Manager."

Hathon opened his eyes and nodded almost vigorously. He was ready now to exchange glances with Ravenstreet, who realised at once that this move had been arranged between Hathon and Selby.

After an encouraging growl from Hathon, Selby went on to remind the Board that at the October meeting it had already approved the possibility of appointing a Production Manager. Details could be settled later. What was important now was to assure Sir Charles Ravenstreet that the Company wished to make the fullest use of his valuable services—blah blah blah.

The Chairman wished to associate himself with these views and was sure the Board felt as he did. The Board made various noises to show its approval. The Chairman looked inquiringly at Ravenstreet, and most of the Board followed his example.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman," said Ravenstreet, still feeling a long way from the meeting, "but there's no chance of my accepting this suggestion. I can only repeat what I said at our October meeting. If a man is fit to be Production Manager of this Company, which is a manufacturing concern and not a finance corporation, then in my view he should be in chief control of it—in short, Managing Director. Clearly it isn't the view of this Board, as we have seen from the voting this afternoon. I couldn't serve the Company properly if I felt at cross-purposes with its management. But if you feel that you should have a Production Manager, then, Mr. Chairman, I propose Mr. Garson."

It was decided to postpone the appointment. The meeting went droning on, and Ravenstreet wearily put in a word here and there, as if he felt they were sitting round a table in a dead world.

Sometimes the Board of the New Central Electric Company met in the main works, near Birmingham. This meeting, however, had been held in the London office, a first and second floor in Victoria Street. Ravenstreet escaped as soon as he could, and went along to the Managing Director's room, where his secretary, Miss Latham, was waiting to do the afternoon letters.

She looked at him anxiously; she was an exceptionally fast and reliable worker, but always rather anxious, as if she had no confidence in her ability. He said nothing about the meeting, but began at once to dictate letters, keeping her hard at it for nearly an hour.

"We'll get the first four or five off today, Miss Latham," he told her when he had done. "The rest can go tomorrow."

"Yes, Sir Charles." But she lingered, looking at him appealingly.

"If you're wondering what happened at the meeting, then I'll tell you. Mr. Selby was appointed Managing Director by a handsome vote."

"I knew it, I knew it," she cried, half in distress and half reproachful, as if it had been his fault. And perhaps it had. Perhaps he had been too confident.

"Well — never mind, Miss Latham."

She hesitated. "Ever since I've been here, I've worked for you, Sir Charles. Now I don't know whether I transfer to Mr. Selby, because he'll be Managing Director, or stay with you. I mean—it's never been settled."

"Mr. Selby will probably want to keep his own secretary. But if you're to remain with the Company—and you certainly ought to, Miss Latham—then I don't think you can stay with me. However, I'll see that you're decently fixed up. With Mr. Garson, perhaps."

"You mean—you're leaving?"

"Do you know, I believe I am." His tone echoed her surprise. Up to that moment it had not occurred to him that he might walk out altogether. "We'll see. Don't bother about it now. Let me have the letters that are going as soon as you can, please."

She turned at the door, her face crumpling. "I think it's wicked."

He smiled. "Come to think of it, so do I."

Ten minutes later, old George Hathon came lumbering in wheezing over a cigar. "Charles, I think you're sulking." He lowered his two hundred and fifty pounds into the arm-chair, keeping his bloodshot little eyes fixed in an accusing stare.

"I don't think so, George," said Ravenstreet coolly. "But I'm not going to pretend I like what you've done or the way you've done it."

Hathon nodded and grunted. "Can't talk here. Anything to keep you?"

"A few letters to sign. Why?"

"Care to have a drink with me? I'll take you along to one of my clubs. I have my car and I'll go down and wait in it for you. Had enough of this place. All right, my boy? Good!" He groaned as he pushed his great carcase out of the chair. "We'll have our drink among the rich and powerful, Charles. Do you good to see 'em. Don't be too long."

Just after six o'clock they settled themselves in a corner of the smoke-room of Hathon's grandest club, a cavernous black-leathery place.

"Yes, a lot of power and money looks in here about this time, Charles," said Hathon, after he had ordered their whisky.

"And with all due respect," said Ravenstreet, "they're not a pretty sight."

"No worse than you find in the nearest pub," the old man protested.

"They should be better—they cost more."

"Don't be disgruntled, my boy. But we won't talk until we've tasted the whisky. And I doubt if there's a better whisky anywhere in London except perhaps at the Caledonian Club." He sat facing the room and now and then nodded or waved a mottled hand at some man he knew. Ravenstreet lit a pipe and smoked in silence. The whisky arrived, was sampled, commended.

"Well now, Charles, you don't like what we've done nor the way we've done it—um? Feel the knife in your back—sort of thing?"

"Just about that." Ravenstreet was curt.

Hathon grinned. Like most men of his kind, old and fat but once formidable, he could not easily be jolted out of his assurance.

"I didn't enjoy it. But it's the best thing for the Company, Charles.

There was a lot of pressure put on me, but I didn't agree until I'd thought it out carefully. I don't particularly like Selby. He's not a friend of mine—never will be. You are—at least I hope so." He gave Ravenstreet a droll look, but there was serious inquiry in his tone.

"I hope so too, George. I think you were wrong, from every point of view, but I don't propose to pick a quarrel about it. You know as well as I do, though, that Selby's not an electrical engineer, not an industrialist, not a producer at all. It would be just the same to him if we were marketing safety-pins or dried fruit. He's a financial man—"

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"Right," Hathon cut in firmly. "He's an accountant—let's face it—no different from a hundred others who are now managing big enterprises. Not my type of fella. Wouldn't dream of bringing him here, for instance—"

"You'd be wrong, then. Just his kind of place."

"But he's what we need now, my boy. That's why there are so many of 'em about these days. Jumped-up accountants, sitting on top. I don't like it. But then I don't like anything that happens now."

"Why do you give in, then?" Ravenstreet hardly troubled to take the contempt out of his voice.

"Because I think nearly everyone's wrong," Hathon replied promptly, "so it's not worth while trying to change a bit of it. Because I'm old, I hate trouble, and I want to be able to afford to sit here and a few places like this. Selby's the type we need now. He knows finance, knows how to fiddle his way around. Of course, he couldn't have done what you've done for the Company. He's not you. But then, my boy, we've got you. We might have lost him."

"You haven't got me, you know, George."

"I know, I know," the old man cried rather irritably. "You won't serve as Production Manager under Selby. I guessed you wouldn't, before you told us. But all that can be arranged."

"No, it can't," said Ravenstreet. "I'm getting out, George."

Hathon pushed out a swollen underlip. "You're sulking again. Stop it. Swallow your pride. Swallow that whisky too—we'll have another. But no sulks now."

Ravenstreet waited a moment or two. "I'm not doing this in a fit of temper, George. I'm quite cool and clear-headed. You see, if what you say it true— about the Company needing Selby—"

"You can take my word for that, Charles Didn't want the fella for his beautiful eyes—"

"Then it isn't my kind of company any longer. I don't want any part of it. The sensible thing is to sell out—and I'm giving you notice now, George, that my holding's for sale. I'd be obliged if you and Selby would quote me a price as soon as you reasonably can. Don't let's argue about this. My mind's made up."

"Take a long holiday. Enjoy yourself. Travel

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Wayland and his two friends looked incongruous against the wrecked building—rather like a vaudeville act.

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Continuing . . . . The Magicians

from page 9

—we can fix it for you. You're stale." Hathon looked at him accusingly. "I've thought so for some time."

"I'm not stale," said Ravenstreet reflectively. "I'm dead. I think I died about four years ago."

"Don't be fancy. The truth is, you're at a silly age—middle fifties—I remember 'em. Still not old enough to enjoy the moment and to the devil with everything else. Hang on and things will come right again, after a fashion. I'm seventy-four, and in theory I don't like anything any more, but in practice I enjoy this and that."

He went on: "You ought to have married again, Charles. I know you weren't lucky with Maureen. Never cared for her myself, though perhaps I oughtn't to say so, for the poor girl's dead and her father was one of my oldest friends. A great friend to you too, my boy."

"Yes, I loved old Frank. Better than I did Maureen, though I tried, for all our sakes. I think I didn't marry again, George, because when I occasionally thought of it I was too busy, and when I was less busy I'd stopped thinking about it. And no family, of course. At the risk of being told I'm being fancy again, I'll tell you that really I'm dead. Now that the Company's been taken away from me, I see it quite clearly. So here's where you tell me I ought to have some nice hobbies—like you."

"All right, I've said it." Hathon grinned, but when he continued he was serious. "Even the silliest might knock a brick or two out of the wall. You'd be surprised."

"It's a matter of temperament, George," said Ravenstreet gloomily. "You're naturally an old hobby boy, trying this, tasting that. I'm not. I've got to be completely engrossed, as I was for so long by the Company. If I'm not, then I haven't enough interest and energy left to buy some old china or grow peaches."

"All right," Hathon said. "Try good works. Hate 'em myself, but they might suit you. A Cause, Charles. Or just plain politics. Thoroughly engrossing, they tell me."

"No, George. Neither of the two big parties seems to be doing any honest thinking, and I couldn't start a party of my own, not at my time of life." He took a drink and then re-lit his pipe.

"Besides, I don't care sufficiently," he added. "You ought to care about people in general—and I don't. Less and less, I'm afraid. We seem to me to get sillier and sillier, George. These New Elizabethans, herded by the Government and the unions, stampeded in any direction by the popular Press, spending their evenings watching dons and actresses playing parlor games on television!"

"That'll do, my boy. There's a lot of newspaper twaddle about, of course, and I fancy the new working class is softer and spongier than it ought to be. But now I'll tell you something, Charles, that ought to wipe that sneer off your face. In my circle—and remember I've five grandchildren between twenty and thirty—there is something Elizabethan about a lot of the youngsters, and both the boys and girls seem to me better than their fathers and mothers were at the same age—more dash and devilment, a richer mixture of enterprise and sensibility. They drive old cars, sail leaky boats, listen to music and quote poetry.

"Your trouble, Charles, is that you don't know 'em. That's what you've missed by not being a family man. You've no real private life."

"No, I've had a profession and then a firm to cherish," said Ravenstreet, not without bitterness. "And I wake up one afternoon and find they've gone. George, it's a bad day to remind me what I've missed. I hadn't much, but it's just been taken away from me——"

Their corner had been invaded. A tallish, middle-aged fellow was smiling down at them. He was an odd figure, looking almost deformed, for he had curiously high, wide shoulders and a long chimney face that was much lower than it ought to have been, as if he had no neck.

"Sorry to butt in, Hathon," he began. His voice was surprisingly deep, quiet, soothing.

"Oh—hello, Karney," Hathon grunted. "You two know each other? Sir Edwin Karney—Sir Charles Ravenstreet."

"Heard a lot about you," said Karney with a broad smile. "Like to have a talk sometime." He turned to Hathon. "Came across to ask if next Tuesday afternoon would be any good to you—for the Fulbridge Committee. Suits most of us. Have a look at your book."

"I can manage it," said Hathon. "Though you don't really need me."

"Absolutely essential, my dear man," said Karney in his almost hypnotic bass. Then he stared at Ravenstreet again.

"Member here, Ravenstreet? No? Well, like to have a talk sometime. Lunch perhaps? May I give you a ring?" Now he looked from one man to the other, his smile wider than ever. "I hear Selby's taking over your New Central Electric concern——"

Hathon shook a fist at him. "Go away. You're a dangerous fella, Karney, and we don't want you here."

Ravenstreet watched the high, wide shoulders move across the room, which was now well filled, smoky, loud with talk.

"Now how could that fellow know what happened at a private board meeting only three hours ago?"

"Don't ask me," said Hathon irritably. "Fellas of that sort always know. They live by being in the know. I'm told Karney plays with millions now. Pops up all over the place. If he asks you to a meal, better accept, Charles. He may have an idea for you. That's assuming, of course, that you mean what you say when you talk of leaving us altogether."

"I do, George. Better make me an offer for my shares before the Karneys rush in. Yes, I know," he added hastily as Hathon began a rumbling protest, "naturally I'd give you the first chance, though I'm not sure you deserve it. But I want a capital sum, not income. I'm tired of paying taxes."

Hathon reflected a moment or two. "It'll amount to a tidy bit of money. Over two hundred thousand, I fancy. There are fellas here who can smell it already. Be careful, Charles. Outside our industry you're a babe in the woods. Another whisky?"

"No, thank you, George. I must go. I'm dining with Garson—he knew what was coming, of course, when he asked me. I ought to have seen it. No excuse. I wasn't always so dense. It probably means that somewhere at the back of my mind I didn't care. I'll go back to the works tomorrow and begin doing some tidying up. Don't expect me at Victoria Street until the middle of next week. I'll leave you to break the news to Selby, then you can arrange the purchase between you."

He got up out of his chair with unnecessary vigor, as if it needed an effort to escape from this somnolent, whisky-and-cigar atmosphere . . .

Garson, who was Sales Manager and spent most of his time at the London office, had a fairly large flat off Haverstock Hill. His wife, Peggy, was a bouncy little woman, foolish but cheerful and friendly. When Ravenstreet arrived, rather late, the other three guests were already there, drinking cocktails.

As he had expected, two of them were young Treves and his wife. Anne Treves looked vaguely aristocratic in a tall, blond, scraggy way, but she had an unhappy social manner, always making commonplace remarks in a strained voice.

The other guest was new; and Ravenstreet soon decided that she had been included not merely to balance the dinner party but to enliven it, specially for him. She was Anne's cousin, a Mrs. Mavis Westfret, also tall and blond, but with nothing of the half-starved look that Anne had, being altogether the gorgeous creature, all gold and scarlet, smiles, bright remarks, flashing glances, hands on the men's arms: a glorious technicolor girl.

She had probably been told what to do but in any case did not need any telling, for Ravenstreet was not only the one unattached male present but also obviously the richest and most powerful, so she concentrated on him at once, making him feel that he was Einstein attending a children's party and also the Caliph of Baghdad who had just acquired a new slave.

The dinner, which had been cooked by an elderly Central European woman, like a depressed fortuneteller, who had to be praised and thanked by everybody, was both messy and inadequate; but there was a great deal to drink, and perhaps because the food was not sufficiently substantial for the end of a long day, they all drank too

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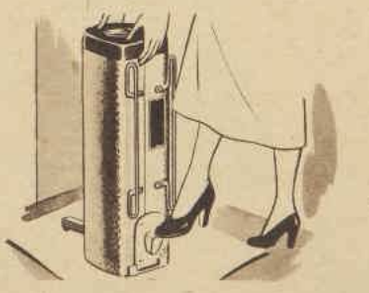

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• Talent bequest executors describe

Man who left fortune to help youth

What sort of man was Peter Mitchell, the man who left Australia's strangest will? What led him to bequeath his fortune to benefit generations of promising young Australians? The answers to these fascinating questions are discussed below by three of the trustees.

PETER MITCHELL

By NONI ROWLAND, staff reporter

IN a charming brick cottage at Robertson, 90 miles south of Sydney, Mr. Walter G. Henderson, a lifelong friend of Peter Mitchell, and the man who drafted the will which has set the nation talking, lives with his wife and daughter, Jocelyn.

Both Mr. Henderson and Miss Henderson are trustees of the estate. The others are Brigadier R. W. Tovell, of Melbourne, nephew of Mr. Mitchell, and the Union Trustee Company of Australia.

I went to Robertson with staff photographer Ron Berg, who took the pictures of the Hendersons opposite.

Mr. Henderson, a sprightly 83 with a delightful, puckish sense of humor, was glad to talk about his "old friend Peter."

"The will's causing a bit of a stir, eh?" he said. "Well, that's just what Peter would have wanted. He would have been well pleased and interested, and he'd also have been amused.

"We often talked about the will long before it was made," Mr. Henderson added.

"One day while I was on holidays with my family at the seaside I got a message asking me to come back to Albury to draft it.

"I can remember that bit well, because I kept thinking as we sat in the musty office, squatting on uneasy chairs, what a nice time my family must be having at the seaside.

"The interview ended by Peter saying, 'You draft me something. You have my ideas roughly. You draft me something and that will do.'

"I drafted all the suggestions, never thinking they'd all be included, and got the shock of my life when he adopted the lot without changing them.

"Wait a minute now. He did make one change. He said, 'You've left one book out.' That was Stevenson's 'The Wrong Box.' He thought it was one of the most humorous books he'd ever read.

"Peter was a fellow with a whimsical sense of humor," Mr. Henderson added. "I remember hearing a tale about him eating in a dining-room in a wayside hotel near Albury.

"A rather pompous fellow came in—you know, the type that talks loudly and knows everything—and Peter called the waitress over.

"He gave her a couple of pounds to pay for his own lunch and a lot over and said, 'When that man over there goes to pay for his lunch, tell him that the hotel wouldn't think of charging so funny a gentleman, because it pays the hotel to keep people like that around.'

"I met Peter at Albury, where I was a solicitor," said Mr. Henderson. "Although he was 14 years older than I, we became friends. I often stayed out at his property, Bringenbrong—and a bonny place it was.

"From the back you could get a wonderful view of Kosciusko and the Murray River and another river came rushing along the sides of it.

"The Mitchells were a well-known family of pioneer squatters in the Upper Murray valley and Peter was born at Bringenbrong. When his father, Thomas Mitchell, died, Peter and his brother Walter ran the property together.

"After a while they split up. Walter set up on his own on the land on the Victorian side of the border and Peter stayed on the N.S.W. side.

"What did Peter look like? Well, now, he was a short, thick-set man of about 5ft. 7in. or 8in., not very good-looking.

"He had sort of fair hair, cleanshaven except for a small moustache. He was a quiet man with a humorous twinkle in his eye. His clothes didn't trouble him very much, but he was always neatly dressed.

"And he was most abstemious. Didn't smoke or drink and ate less than any man I knew. But he always looked hale and hearty.

"He was a very shrewd, able man and a magnificent judge of horses and cattle. He bred racehorses.

"In his young days, Peter was a reckless rider. A friend told me that he'd never seen anyone so reckless in his life.

"He loved life and was all for strength and efficiency. He was a man who liked to carry out things right off. He also loved his books. Next to the Bible, the book he loved best was Harris' 'Uncle Remus.'"

Mrs. Henderson gave me her impression of Peter Mitchell.

"He was a strong, thick-set nuggety man with a very good sense of humor," she said. He was an excellent host, easy-going, and a very small eater. I never saw him ill-tempered."

Asked if she could remember any action or word that characterised the man, Mrs. Henderson replied: "I think this may give you a clue. Once he asked an agent in Melbourne to buy him a certain horse.

"A telegram came back from the agent asking what price he should go up to. Peter Mitchell wired back, 'I told you to buy the horse.'

"He married late in life, when he was over 50," she added, "and never had any children."

Mr. Henderson, breaking in to speak of Mr. Mitchell's death, told me that he had been buried at Waverley Cemetery, near Sydney.

I was surprised to learn this, because of a reference I had seen in the will requesting that one acre of ground be set aside at Bringenbrong for a family cemetery.

"Well, you see," Mr. Henderson explained, "after old Peter's death the property was sold and cut up, and it wouldn't have been much use taking him back."

I mentioned something else that had caught my attention in the will—a request to "my said wife to protect and take care of 'Skarry,' an aboriginal at Bringenbrong, for the remainder of his life and not let him suffer from want of any necessary or reasonable comfort."

"Skarry was one of the finest little gentlemen I have ever had anything to do with," said Mr. Henderson. "He came to Bringenbrong as part of a team bringing a mob of bullocks down from North Queensland. I was always delighted when he brought me a cup of tea, even though it would be before daylight."

The reference to dawn rising brought a response from Miss Henderson, who had been sitting quietly beside us.

"You had to get up early at Bringenbrong," she said. "The dressing bell went at 6 a.m. even on winter mornings, and there were only cold showers

Terms of bequest

PETER STUCKEY MITCHELL, grazier, of Bringenbrong, near Albury (N.S.W.), made his will—one of the oddest in Australia's history—in 1916, five years before his death at the age of 64.

His will directed that after the death of his wife the net income from his estate should be awarded, through a number of annual competitions, as prizes to 15 unmarried women under the age of 30, 10 youths under 21, and to soldiers, sailors, and police.

However, his widow, Mrs. J. Simson, of Sydney, died only recently, and the estate, originally worth about £215,000, is now reduced to about £160,000.

It may be further reduced to £120,000 if additional duties are imposed following the death of Mrs. Simson.

This would still leave an annual net income of about £5000 as prizes for the competitions.

To be in the running, the women will have to be physically healthy, have a good knowledge of British history and Australian history, geography and primary production, elementary anatomy and physiology, and knowledge and understanding of standard English literature and of parts of the Protestant Bible.

If they can hurdle this section successfully, they will then have to pass the main test, which is:

"Practical and theoretical knowledge of the nursing (in sickness and health), handling, management, training, care, and rearing to perfect health and strength of babies and young children."

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MISS JOCELYN HENDERSON, of Robertson, N.S.W., who is one of the trustees of the Peter Mitchell estate.

MR. W. C. HENDERSON, who is another executor of the will.

breakfast was at seven and the men were away by half-past."

When I asked Miss Henderson why one-third of the prizemoney was to be allocated to women, she replied:

"I think he wanted to encourage the growth of splendid, healthy families. And who are mainly concerned with the rearing of healthy youngsters? Women."

Mr. Henderson gave me a simple answer: "Peter Mitchell was a breeder," he said, "and never bred poor foals and calves himself.

"What was the main idea behind the will? It was to encourage young Australians to get to know their own country better and the countries of the British Commonwealth, to know their own race, and in the case of women, at the same time, to know how to run a home.

Efficiency

"HE wanted to encourage people to read, to grow up physically and mentally healthy. He wanted them to be trained so that they would be thoroughly efficient.

"No, he didn't want to find the perfect woman," Mr. Henderson added. "He knew you can't get perfection. He simply wanted to find the best available.

"This is not a bathing beauty contest, you know. Far from it," he continued. "It's not for butterflies who never do a hand's turn."

When I said that I thought the standard required of women candidates was rather high, father and daughter disagreed, although both thought it might have to be modified slightly.

"Dash it all," Mr. Henderson exploded, "people ought to have read 'Uncle Remus' and most of the other books.

"And that bit about being able to ride a horse and to swim. Old Peter didn't expect champions. He didn't want expert roughriders and Olympic swimmers, but he didn't want people who go and drown themselves in waterholes.

"He wanted them to have the enterprise to make an effort to learn to ride and to swim. Take a city girl, for instance; she could learn to ride in a fortnight's holiday in the country.

"Don't get him wrong. He didn't expect a man from the Snowy River. But, come to think of it, he would have made a good man from Snowy River himself.

"In the section referring to history, he didn't want people to reel off dates. He despised people who rattled off history dates. He preferred those who knew more of the general outlines of history.

"And, dash it all, look here: What's hard about the primary production questions? All she has to say, as far as I am concerned, is that Australia is noted for its wool, wheat, and butter, or something along those lines."

"No fear, she won't," interrupted Miss Henderson. "What about uranium? She'll have to know something about that."

"Not as far as I'm concerned," replied Mr. Henderson and, as his daughter was about to reply, said, "We'll have a talk about that this evening."

Both smiled good-naturedly when I commented that the evenings looked as though they were going to be lively ones in the Henderson household.

Mr. Henderson continued: "And if you think that some people won't apply because they think it will be too hard to meet the requirements, that's very good.

"Because Peter wouldn't have wanted the type that would be bluffed by the contest. He said, 'They will have to be pretty good to comply with this.' He only wanted the good ones, not those who will be bluffed. He wanted people with initiative."

The other trustee of the will, Brigadier R. W. Tovell, who lives at Brighton, Victoria, told Sheila McFarlane, of our Melbourne staff, that though his uncle's will was devoted to youth, he could not remember any demonstration of affection from Mr. Mitchell.

"Rather, we were in fear of him," added Brigadier Tovell. "He was an austere man, quiet and serious. He was also a bit of a philosopher, a great reader with a fantastic memory, and an ardent collector of curios.

"Uncle Peter spouted literature almost continually. Nobody could ever beat him on a Biblical question, though he was not a regular churchman."

Brigadier Tovell said that Bringenbrong, the name of the former Mitchell property, meant "home of the red kangaroo" in the native tongue.

"Although most of the land has been broken up, the original homestead and part of the property are still intact," he said. The homestead itself is a rambling colonial place which has been gradually added to through the years.

"It is surrounded by wonderful country. There are lots of small dairy farms in the area now."

Marriage

LATE in life Peter Mitchell married—in 1912. There were no children.

"He and his wife spent most of their nine years of marriage travelling abroad," added Brigadier Tovell. "They both loved travel. I remember they always returned from their trips laden with bric-a-brac and souvenirs."

Brigadier Tovell, who has been the Liberal member of Parliament for Brighton, Victoria, for nine years, is a chartered accountant in Melbourne.

He was commissioned during World War 1 and commanded the fourteenth battalion A.M.F. from 1924 to 1930 and the 46th battalion Brighton Rifles from 1932 to 1939.

The 26th Aust. Infantry Brigade was under his command during the last war. He was Minister for Education in Victoria from 1948 to 1950.

Footnote: Mrs. Florence Nankervis, wife of the new owner of the Bringenbrong homestead, told me by telephone that the only trace left of the Mitchell family on the property was the cemetery where Peter Mitchell's father and mother were buried. It was situated on a hill, just half a mile beyond the house.

And the only reminder of the Peter Mitchell household was three account books, in which Mrs. Nankervis told me the sum of 10/- was recorded as the weekly wage paid to the cook.

BRIGADIER RAYMOND TOVELL, C.B.E., D.S.O., E.D., M.L.A., of Brighton, Victoria, a nephew of the late Peter Mitchell, of Bringenbrong, and one of the trustees of the bequest.

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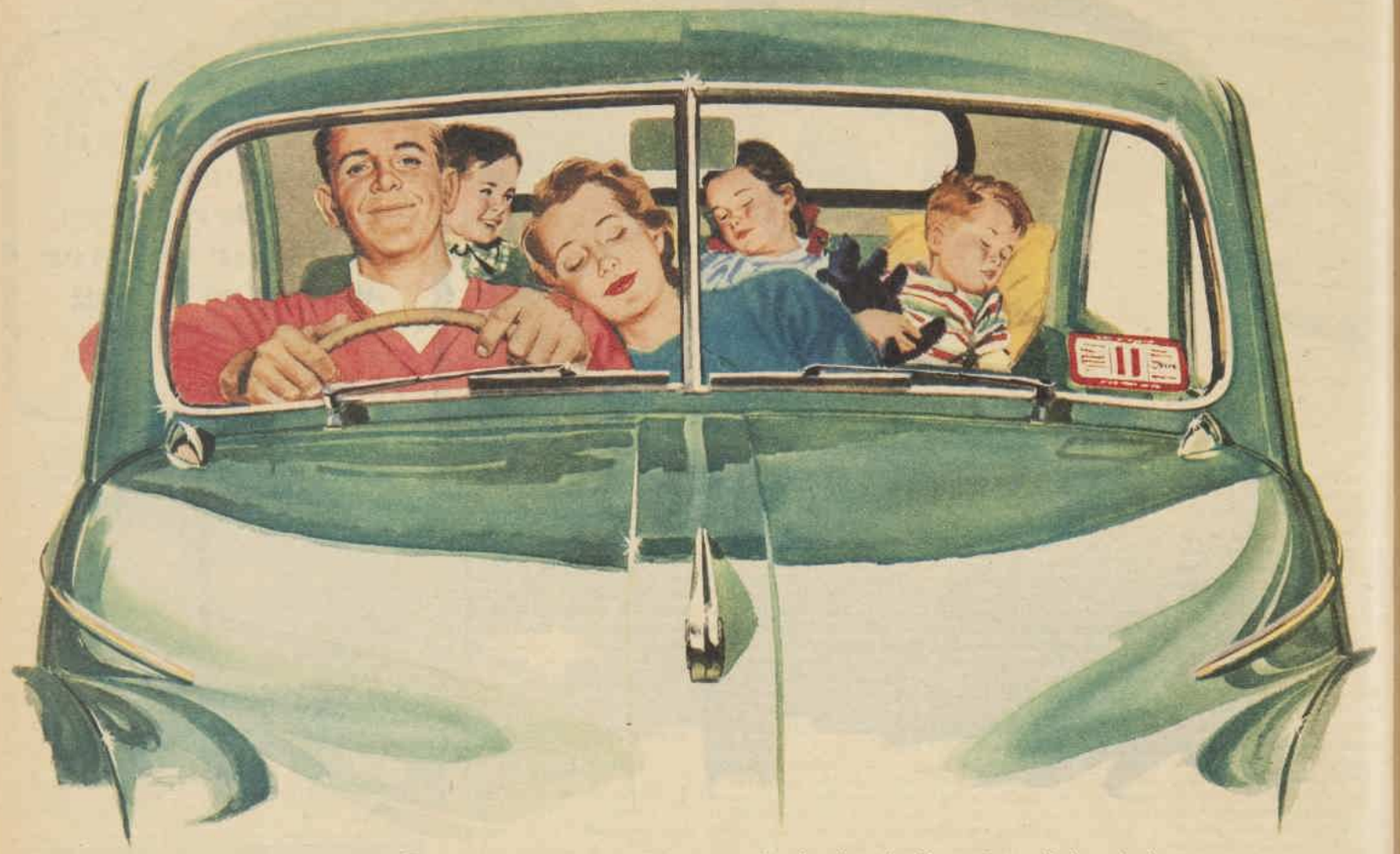

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For teenagers

MONTHLY TEENAGE SECTION

Planning a trip abroad

Have you been one of the clever ones and saved hard for your trip abroad? If you have and are about to get rid of those itchy feet, here are some travel hints that may come in handy.

● Who is the best person to consult about your trip?

A reputable travel agent. He will handle everything for you — make your reservations, buy your tickets, and advise you on everything from foreign exchange to the "bargain" countries to stay in.

And he won't charge you for the service. He gets his commission from shipping and airline companies and hotels.

● Should you book your passage now, although you are not planning to go abroad for at least a year?

Yes. Bookings are extremely heavy and if you change your mind you can always get your deposit refunded up to about a week before the ship sails.

● What's the best way to travel to England?

You can take your pick and travel by cargo boat with 11 other passengers or embark on a luxury liner with 1199 fellow-travellers.

You can travel for as low as £100 or as high as £500, depending on your purse or taste.

You can board a ship that travels on the normal route through the Suez Canal or one that sails across the Pacific through the Panama Canal. You can voyage to Canada and the U.S.A. (you will need a transit visa for the U.S.), go overland, and then make an Atlantic crossing.

And if you want to get abroad in a hurry and are fortunate enough to have the fare, you can travel by air.

If you fly via Singapore, you can pay £373/15/- for a first-class one-way ticket, or £298/15/- for a tourist-class ticket.

You will pay slightly more if you travel via America—£386/5/- first class and £310 tourist class.

● How do you get a passport and for what foreign countries do you need visas?

Your nearest immigration department office will issue you with a passport after you have filled in an application form, produced two photographs of yourself, and identification in the form of a birth or naturalisation certificate. A fee of £1 is charged.

At present only three Western European countries require visas. They are France, which charges £2/2/-; Spain, which charges £1/15/-; and Portugal, £1/5/5.

The visas can be obtained at the consulates of the three countries.

● When should you apply for a taxation clearance?

This should be done about 10 days before your ship sails.

● What health precautions should you take?

Although a smallpox vaccination is compulsory only if you travel by air, it's sensible to have it done before you sail. Moreover, some shipping companies demand it and some countries won't allow you ashore without an international vaccination certificate.

It's also a good idea to have cholera and typhoid vaccinations if you intend to do much travelling in the East.

While in the Orient, you'd be wise to avoid eating salads and drinking water that hasn't been boiled. If you're thirsty, buy a bottle of soft drink. And be careful about eating uncooked meat.

● How much money are you allowed to take out of Australia?

If you are lucky enough to have that problem, you can take out up

By NONI ROWLAND, staff reporter

to £1625, of which only £375 can be spent on the Continent.

An extra allocation of 200 dollars is made if you are travelling to England via Canada and the U.S.A.

However, in actual notes you are allowed to take out only £4 Australian and £10 sterling for incidental expenses.

● What is the best way to take your money?

The most convenient way is in the form of travellers' cheques. These can be obtained through your local bank and cashed almost anywhere—in restaurants, shops, hotels, etc.

● How much money will you need for the ship and what's the minimum you should have on landing?

You should budget for a minimum of £20 for expenses on board ship and to spend at ports.

And you should have at least £50 in your pocket when you land in England. Even if you plan to get a job immediately you arrive, you should have at least this much to tide you over the first few weeks. Budget for £10 a week at least until you get acclimatised.

● What do you do if you lose your passport and run out of money in a foreign country?

Your passport is probably your most important "luggage" item. Guard it carefully and always carry it around with you. But if you do lose it, report the loss immediately to the nearest Australian migration officer, diplomatic or consular representative, Government commissioner, or trade commissioner.

● How will you get on sharing a cabin with strangers?

Most cabins are small, even in first class. So if six of you are sharing the same one, consideration for the other person is most important.

Try to organise it so that you don't all want to dress for dinner or get ready for breakfast at the same time.

Keep your section tidy and stow your suitcases away where people won't be tripping over them. And if you return to the cabin late at night after a party or dance, don't make too much noise. Remember that others may be trying to sleep.

● Will you find it hard to travel around the Continent if you don't speak foreign languages?

No. There's always someone available who can speak English or has enough knowledge of it to help you out. There will be times when you find yourself in language strife, but you'll probably have fun getting yourself out of it.

However, brush up that school French and spend an hour or two each week memorising handy Italian, Spanish, and German words. You'll get along better if you pay people the courtesy of trying to speak their language.

● How much should you tip?

In most parts of the Continent, a service charge is added to your hotel and restaurant bill. This charge, at present about 15 per cent. of the total bill, is regarded as adequate compensation for the services of the waiter and the maid.

However, in some parts of Europe you may find that an extra tip is expected.

In addition, tipping is expected at most Continental (and English) hairdressers and theatres. A small coin will be sufficient.

Porters and taxi-cab drivers also expect a tip. But be firm. A small one will do.

● How will you get to know people overseas?

Letters of introduction are invaluable. Before you leave ask your relatives and friends for the addresses of their relatives and friends in Europe.

Don't deliver letters in person.

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Teenage section

YOUTH-HOSTELLING ROUND EUROPE

HOSTELLERS at Innsbruck, where the hostel has hot showers—an unusual luxury. In front are Helen Ostinga (left), of Newcastle, N.S.W., and Jill Martin, of Southport, Queensland; at back are Ken Epps (left), of Townsville, Queensland, and Tom Kane, of Massachusetts, U.S.A., who took these pictures. The taxi belongs to another group of Australian travellers.

CYCLING HOSTELLERS (left) unload their packs in the courtyard of a tiny house which is the Youth Hostel at Ribe, Denmark. On the steep roof of the house is a huge stork's nest.

COUNTRY HOSTEL (above) at Vasturas, Sweden, on the shores of Lake Malaren. Fees in the association are 15/- a year for adults, 10/- for those under 21, schoolchildren 5/-.

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Community living which makes travel possible

Ask a Copenhagen tram conductor or a Guidecca gondolier in Venice who the greatest travellers are and the answer will be: "Those Australians." Most of them have rucksacks, and they hitch-hike or rattle along by third-class rail; nearly all of them stay at those havens for budget-tight travellers, the Youth Hostels.

By TOM KANE

ABOUT 1700 Australian members of the Youth Hostel Association go to Europe every year and use hostel facilities on their walking, hitch-hiking, cycling, or motoring tours.

For 1/6 sterling they can stay at any one of 1400 European hostels, some of which provide meals at about 3/- each. To others they can take their own food, cook it in the hostel kitchen, and use the hostel laundry or washroom to launder their clothes before going on.

International Y.H.A. rules allow hostellers only three nights at each hostel, but this rule is not always enforced if the hostels are not crowded. As a rule, Youth Hostels provide separate dormitories for men and women, a common room, and cooking facilities. One must expect the inconveniences inevitable in dormitory accommodation; one must expect to "rough it."

But every hostel is a source of first-hand travel information, and hostellers discover that they are temporarily in a sort of unofficial club formed by Continental rucksack tourists.

Often a familiar face is found because the ways of travellers often cross. And it's a pleasant circumstance to renew a friendship over a shared meal and compare the miles covered and the sights seen since the previous meeting in some distant hostel.

Although most hostels are noted for their modesty rather than their glamor, each has individuality.

A hostel may be a farmhouse or a castle, the basement of a school, or a specially designed chalet. It may accommodate 12 or 200.

As in Stockholm, it may be a ship anchored in the harbor. At Salzburg it is built into the old fortress wall of the city.

Austria is a crossroads for travellers going to and from Italy, Germany, Switzerland, and France. It was in the hostel at Innsbruck, known mostly for its hot showers (a feature not common in hostels), that I encountered the largest collection of Australians.

I joined three Queenslanders on the road to Vienna, and watched them experience their first snow in the Alps and gamely attempt ski-ing. Not without causing local apprehension, we curled up snugly in our sleeping-bags one night on the counters of a railroad station.

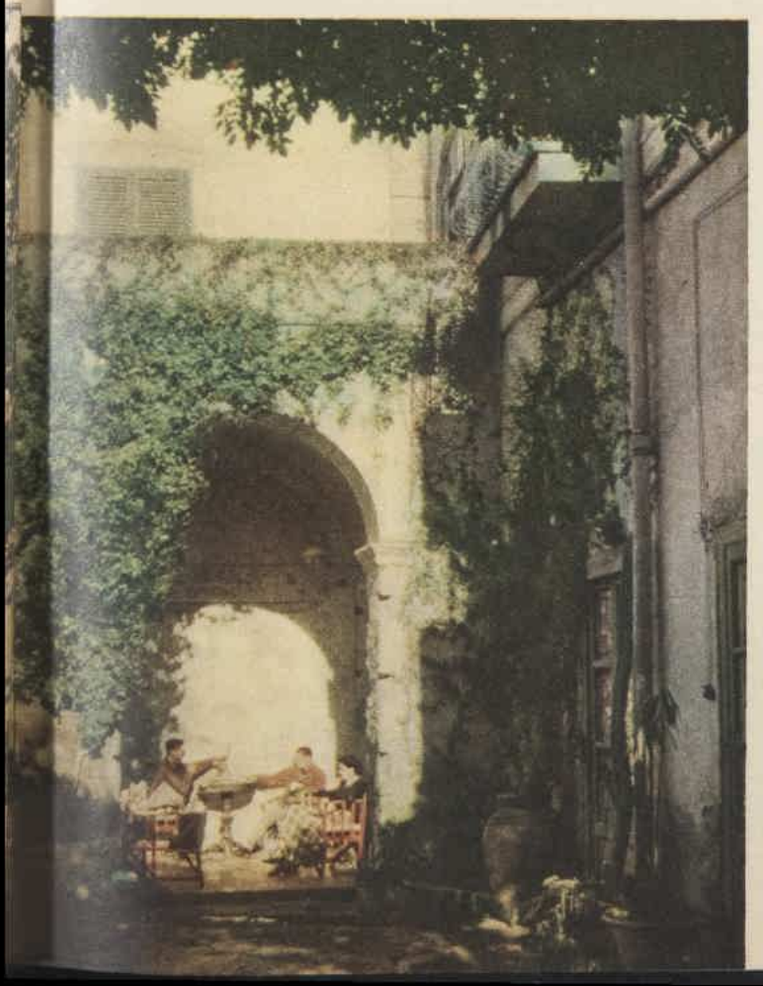
In the winter months those still travelling migrate southward.

When the warmth-seeking migrants reach Naples they usually find their way to a village near Sorrento called Meta. Here there is a pension-cum-hostel where life is easy and oranges grow in the patio.

While I was there the residents decided to hold a feast to make up for months of travel, during which most had existed on semolina, cheese, and chianti.

Australians had killed three turkeys, Germans and Italians had plucked them, Canadians had stuffed them, South Africans had roasted them, and all ate with gusto. The dessert was a huge apple-pie baked in a pizza-dish by a Dutch girl.

That was an international rucksack travellers' banquet.



***COURTYARD** (left) of the Pension August hostel at Meta near Sorrento. Mrs. Joy Chester, of Sydney, N.S.W., relaxes with some fellow hostellers who visited there in search of warm Italian sunshine.*

***FROM THE DECKS** (above) of the Af Chapman, a three-masted sailing vessel which serves as Stockholm's Youth Hostel, hostellers can look out over the city while they relax over their morning coffee.*

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Jobs in London for budget tourists

By 21-year-old contributor LENORE NICKLIN

● London is the mecca for most Australians, but it's an expensive place. While there, young visitors take varied and sometimes strange jobs in their pursuit of the pound sterling.

LONDON'S Australian section is to be found in the less expensive parts of Kensington, Shepherd's Bush, and the seedy tenements of Nottinghill Gate.

The Australians are a migratory colony.

In summer they can be found tramping along in hikers' clothing or crowded together in old cars anywhere from Lapland to Capri. But winter finds them huddling in front of gas fires (which burn your shins while the rest of you remains gooseflesh), struggling with sausages on a gas ring, and going off on the crowded 9.15 tube every morning in search of the all-important pound sterling.

Several of my friends have done "relief teaching," which requires a University degree and is very well paid. However, they invariably give up after a maximum of five weeks; the strain of being placed in front of 40 tough little East Enders and told to keep order is just too much.

The headmaster leaves you with the warning, "Keep an eye on Tommy in the second line—up on his fourth charge of breaking and entering last week," wishes you good luck, and shuts the door on you and your fate.

The idea is not so much to teach anything but to keep them so busy that they have no time to set fire to the building.

Margot, who has since turned to the much milder occupation of nannying, explained that she'd rather teach arithmetic to the "Girls of St. Trinians" than face relief teaching again.

Within her first five minutes an enterprising little cockney had stealthily walked up to her, put a hand across his mouth, and whispered confidentially, "If ya give me trippence I'll tell ya the ones that talk." This handsome offer was declined.

NANNYING is a very popular occupation. It provides a room and three square meals a day (a major consideration) and there is sometimes the chance of travel.

Janet (another ex-relief teacher) was even flown to Switzerland with her tiny charge, lived at a fabulous hotel in the Alps, and was allowed to take ski-ing lessons.

Unfortunately, when Janet returned to the London establishment she found that microphones had been installed in every room (her employer was a scientist) so that, if at any time the parents were anxious about their child, they could just turn on a switch and listen-in to any room the child happened to be in at the time.

Janet felt she was at a distinct disadvantage.

Another friend, Jennifer, had a position as a private nurse to a very aged lady in Grosvenor Square. Also in the entourage was a French cook, and every time I saw Jennifer she was ecstatic over some new dish. Jennifer lived on the most delicate of rum omelets, cheese souffles, and underdone steaks. "You just don't know what food is," she'd cry.

I thought this was very probably true, as at our flat we sat down regularly to sausages, potatoes, and the inevitable brussels sprouts. (Meat in London is very dear and so are green vegetables other than brussels sprouts.)

Another great attraction was that Michael Wilding and Elizabeth Taylor occupied the suite above.

DURING Christmas there were plenty of jobs available in the big West End stores. However, the hours were very long and the pay very small; the only hope of getting a respectable amount was by earning a large commission.

TEENAGE SECTION

My flat-mate, Pat, who was working in the biggest of all the West End stores, found herself in the men's section selling braces — and braces only. Even during the two weeks preceding Christmas Pat managed to sell remarkably few braces.

Another much more interesting counter job was Judy's.

Judy worked in an art shop in Tottenham Court Road and met the bearded Bohemian art world en masse.

One day a tall, attractive girl (complete with black, stove-pipe trousers and a coarse camel hair duffle coat) came into the shop and ordered a surprisingly large amount of art material.

She explained rather self-consciously, "A few weeks ago I saw an exhibition of work by young Australian artists and I was so impressed I've booked my passage to Sydney. They won't have much of this sort of stuff there."

Judy promptly explained that she was from Sydney herself and that the whole of Australia didn't look like Russell Drysdale's painting of the outback.

FOR those who want jobs from day to day there is always "The Elizabeth Agency." You do housework and are paid the handsome sum of 2/6 per hour.

You report at such and such a house at 9.30 a.m., timidly knock at the door, and when it is opened, announce: "I'm the 'Elizabeth' for today," whereupon you are promptly requested to "come this wa and are shown a pile of wa ing-up, a stack of ironing, horror of horrors, the kitch floor to be scrubbed.

The cost of living in Lond is high—or so it seemed many of us who for the f time in our lives had to co with rent, gas, electric and, worse, food bills.

When eggs went down fr 6d. to 2d. each, it was a main topic of conversation.

If you overheard one your flat-mates on the pho crying ecstatically: "Yes, it marvellous!" you knew wasn't referring to the C Vic's production of "Hamle or the Renoir exhibition the Tate, but to the all-i portant fact that eggs we down to twopence.

Our finances were alwa in a precarious state, so took it in turns at the flat write letters to the magazin that offered a guinea for pu lished readers' letters.

This failed to provide with a regular income, but arrival of an occasio guinea was a great help.

During last winter London a soap powd firm began a tremend advertising campaign their new washing powd Housewives all over Engla were to be presented with large free sample of the pro uct.

I know of at least four A tralians who joined "c cause," travelling round En land in a large van, a bravely handing out sampl in spite of fierce dogs, win gales, and icy pavements.

Susan, who was an origi member of our flat, left us take to the road. We all we through a worrying we beforehand, while she lea by heart the little piece had to recite to the housew

I would no sooner sit do to do a little much-need mending than Susan wou race up with all the enth siasm of someone learning first stage part, and "Hear me say my piece."

When last heard of, Sus had reached Manchester, no doubt is still saying "Goo morning, Madam, I am selling anything. . . "

MY own job was with Polish barristers—as th waitress.

Since the war they had a little restaurant in Kensi ton. Our customers ran from an ex-Polish countes long-haired music stude from nearby Albert Hall.

Everyone working in cafe, except me, was Pol and the language diffic caused many a misunderstan ing of orders between the chef, Kaisek, and my However, we became friends, and great was pride when one day he m moned me to the kitchen showed me how to make "nek," the Polish cheese for which the little cafe justly famous.

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LUXURY VOYAGE ACROSS PACIFIC

Teenage section

● Across the Pacific from Sydney to Vancouver and San Francisco and back again, great ocean liners now ply a regular service. One of the ships making this run is the Oronsay, which, on its last trip, carried 1200 passengers. Honolulu was among the ports of call.

FANCY-DRESS BALL was held on board the Oronsay at sea. Above are Margaret Maxwell as Charlie Chaplin and Mr. J. Mounser, who was a hospital patient.

IN THE TAVERN BAR (right) were the ship's assistant surgeon, Michael Price, Betty McAllister, Belinda Shannon, and assistant purser Richard Williams.

AT HONOLULU. Dr. Neil Sutherland, of Melbourne, and Mrs. Mary Clough, of Brisbane, walk on Waikiki Beach.

DECK GAMES were always an enjoyable item in the day's programme for the ship's passengers. Martha Fowler, of Hollywood, U.S., and Jacqueline Medway, of Gunning, N.S.W., play tennis.

PILLOW FIGHT in the swimming-pool was one of the aquatic sports. The contestants are Catriona Anderson, of London, and Gillian Wallace, of Naracoorte, S.A. Pictures by Henry Tregillgas.

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If you've read these famous American magazines

you've read about

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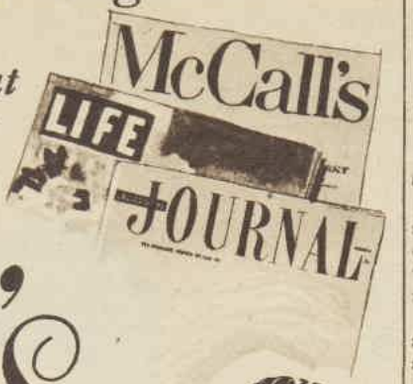

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So . . . use Trushay as you would any regular lotion—whenever you want your hands to look their lovely best. As well, always use Trushay before you start to work!

2/3
3/6
5/9

Teenage section

Meet the orchestra

Friends knocking at my door these past few nights mu have been mystified by the extraordinary sounds they heard- a grunting double-bass, a booming bass drum, a tinkly glocke spiel, and a slightly hysterical flute, all of them disassociate

By
Bernard Fletcher

THE explanation is that I have discovered a set of four standard records called "Instruments of the Orchestra." The title is almost self-explanatory. It consists of solo demonstrations of all the instruments you're likely to hear in a symphony orchestra, divided into their sections — strings, woodwind, brass, and percussion.

You might be inclined to think, as I did at first, that such a recording would be dull. You might also say to yourself, "Yes, I'd like to become more familiar with the various families of instruments, but there are so many other records I want to buy first."

The whole point is that instructive records like these will add a hundredfold to your enjoyment of those other discs later on, so it's really an investment for the future.

Unless you have had thorough musical training or own a pair of super-acute eardrums it is often very difficult to tell one instrument from another close relative in the same family, particularly when heard in a full orchestra. With this recording you can compare them side by side, so to speak.

It's also good training to pop the discs on without looking at the labels, and then learn to name correctly the instruments one by one.

Of great assistance in identifying the instruments is a booklet which has been printed to accompany the records. It also gives you a short history of each instrument.

The scheme was devised by Sir Malcolm Sargent and it is he who plays the piano accompaniments, each solo being handled by an acknowledged top-notch artist, such as Jean Pougnet (violin), Anthony Pini (cello), John Amadio (flute), Denis Brain (horn), and Sidonie Goossens (harp).

Apart from their instructive value the discs contain lots of interesting excerpts from works by various composers including Saint - Saens, Tchaikovsky, Gluck, Mozart, Wagner, Weber, Bach, Dohnanyi, Haydn, and Ravel.

If you are one of a group of collectors it might be a plan to suggest acquiring the set on a shared basis. They could then be circulated among you *one* disc at a time, turn and turn about. Their numbers are EB594/7.

The points men notice

THAT
your lipstick clashes with your red hat.

THAT
you're wearing that white collar for the second time.

THAT
you think the ladder in your pale stockings can't be noticed.

THAT
you're acid about other girls' good looks.

THAT
your long scarlet nails are a bit grubby underneath.

THAT
you're running over on your heels.

HANDS up anyone who heard of "Der W schutz," by Lortzing! It familiar to some New Aus lians, but it was unknown to until I heard baritone Er Kunz's recording, LO92. discovered that it's a Germ operetta and the name me "The Poacher." Kunz sings extract called "Baculus' Ar in an infectiously comic v and the result is one of most pleasing songs I've he in months. He has a voice t should be heard, and the cording in this case does it justice. His singing is enhanced by the Philharmon Orchestra's accompanim under Otto Ackermann.

ANOTHER exciting vo record, recorded with amazing fidelity that you swear it was microgroove, EC216. This time the sing is a bass, Nicola Rossi-Lem an artist who is rapidly bui ing up a strong reputation. contribution comes from Ac of "Faust," and the two ar are "Calf of Gold" "Mephistopheles' Serenad He makes a thrilling Devil there is magnificent supp from the Philharmonia O chestra, this time under a ferent conductor for each (Fistoulari and Beninten Neglia), with the Chorus the Royal Opera Hou Covent Garden. For the op lover I'd rate this as an ess tial disc.

COLLECTORS of violin pianoforte recordings also well catered for month. A little while Heifetz was heard in a new cording of Beethoven's "P mance No. 1." He now lows it up with "Roma No. 2" on ED1255. B works are "easy Beethove informal and graceful, the sort of music for that laxed mood shared with or two old friends.

Planning a trip abroad

from page 15

Post them off with a covering note saying that you'd like to call if it's convenient.

And if you are fortunate enough to be asked to stay for a week or a week-end, remember to send your hostess flowers after you have left, enclosing a note thanking her for her kindness.

● Are jobs easy to get on the Continent and in London?

On the Continent, extremely difficult. There are long queues for the rare ones.

Most Australians don't have much difficulty getting modest jobs in London. However, some employers are wary about hiring them in case they decide to work for a week, then trip off to Europe.

For the sake of those Australians who'll come after you, be honest when you are being interviewed and say that you intend to go off to Italy in three months' time.

● How much luggage should you take and should you insure it?

Insure it and take as little as possible. It's a costly nuisance when you're travelling.

● Should you buy all your clothes in Australia or put money aside to buy them abroad?

Opinions differ. However, most Australians who have been abroad agree that underwear, woollens, and suits are cheaper in England and there's more variety. And you'll find a lot of chic clothes at amazingly low prices in Europe.

● How do you find accommodation and what are the cheapest places to live in?

On arrival in London, stay at a hotel while you look around for something cheaper. Your travel agent in Australia can make this booking for you.

Your London bank may able to help you. Also out for "To Let" signs in shops.

If there are several of to share expenses, you may able to find a flat. But are expensive—round ab the £7-a-week mark.

Rooms are comparati cheap, and most of them London have gas-rings.

On the Continent avoid big hotels and look for small pensions (board houses), where you can for half the price.

And, of course, youth tels are the cheapest acc modation.

● Should you book your turn trip before you Australia?

Yes—and pay for it you're wise. Unless you a strong will you may the money set aside for return home.

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HERE'S YOUR ANSWER by Kay Melaun

Is virtue old-fashioned? No!

Is virtue outmoded? What is the current moral standard? These are some of the questions posed by Mary Tremayne, of Northbridge, N.S.W., in an article contributed to this page. It arose from the public comment and agitation that followed the tragic sex cases in recent headlines. It is so strong and so timely that we've given the entire page over to it.

Teenage section

DOES the disappearance of the chaperon mean that the men of today are more chivalrous, more trustworthy? Does it mean that the girls have changed and no longer need protection?

"Yes, yes," the girls chorus. "We have changed, we are worldly, we are independent. The society in which we live has taught us how to behave with men."

But has it?

Every girl knows that a man will take as many liberties as he is allowed. The boys say that if they didn't make advances to a girl she would think he didn't like her.

Many a girl will cheapen herself in the eyes of a fellow she has no intention of marrying and who, she well knows, has no intention of marrying her.

She will dress and behave provocatively—and yet be amazed if some man takes her at what he assumes is her own value.

Young people moan, "For heaven's sake!" when parents impose curbs on the places they go and the times they come home.

Many a girl has chafed because her mother has said firmly she can't attend a week-end party of her boy and girl friends.

But the parents are merely grasping at the few guards they can place on modern custom to protect their children.

Yet there are certain social and moral standards by which everyone lives, certain codes of behaviour that, when broken, label the wrongdoer as a misfit in society, that bring on some punishment by the law, public disgrace, scorn from friends, and rarely sympathy or pity.

Sympathy and pity? For the girl who is to become an unmarried mother? For the man who raped a young girl?

"No," all the world will cry. "They deserve punishment. Let the man be given the death sentence. Let the girl look after a fatherless child who will be branded ever after."

There are people who now say: "You have broken the code by which we live; you must be punished severely." Many of them are the same people who contribute to the current attitude that this is an enlightened age.

"Be in it, pal," they say to the boys, and. "Don't be narrow; don't be a prude," to the girls.

When it suits them, apparently, they swing over to the side of the angels and exhort young people to obey the rules.

It's true that no group of people can live together without a set of rules.

Most people would like to conform with them. Every young man wants to be a protector, an escort in the true sense of the word—unless he is maladjusted in some way.

No girl leaving school sets out with the intention of earning a "reputation."

Yet films, plays, some posters and advertisements stress sex. Sexy pictures appear side by side with articles deploring the degradation of today's youth.

How can society really be so inconsistent. No one in his right mind will deny that moral standards appear to have greatly changed. No one can deny, either, that the very attributes of this modern age make it more difficult for men and women to live up to the highest standards.

From a practical viewpoint the case for chastity before marriage is more obvious, perhaps, than the moral one.

Those who play with fire should expect to get burnt—as all young women might remember before indulging in heavy petting.

When it reaches the point where a party is not enjoyed so much as the "session" that follows, it means that innocent pleasures have lost a lot of their flavor. Life must then become clouded by a sense of guilt.

No girl struggling to provide for a child born out of wedlock set out with the intention of burdening her young life with an unwanted baby.

She was just carried along on a tide of gradually weakening principles and self-deception, and the final swamping was inevitable.

Not to be swamped, but to be in the swim is what most young people want—having the same good time that all the others seem to be having.

Have the good time, but don't defeat your own ends.

Accept the challenge that modern living puts up, and keep chaste in spite of it. The wrong sort of pleasure today can destroy the chance of lasting happiness later.

Nearly every girl wants to be a success with men, to be admired, loved, and finally to marry and have a home and children.

You won't find an engaged girl wearing her trousseau clothes before her marriage.

She has the good sense to save them for her married life.

READERS' LETTERS

"AS no one I know personally has any clue to the codes of the Lovers' Stamp Language, I was wondering if you could help me by answering this in your column. Is this language universal?"

Rosemary, Seaton, S.A.

I HAD to find out what the Lovers' Stamp Language is. Like Latin, it's a dead tongue, and no one bothers about it nowadays. In English-speaking countries it drove the post office workers mad for a while before it died. They're geared only for stamps in the top right-hand corner of the envelope. This happened years ago, before the war, and if you used the "language" now the few people who understand the codes would think you were eccentric and out-of-date; the others would write you off as untidy-minded.

* * *

"I AM a girl aged 24 and want to know some exercises to reduce bust, waist, hips, and thighs. Can you help, please?"

B.S., Adelaide, S.A.

From time to time we publish slimming exercises. Watch for Carolyn Earle's beauty advice.

TEENAGER'S STORY PUBLISHED

Many short stories submitted by teenagers for publication were of a creditable standard, even though not quite good enough. A shining exception is "Night Vigil," by Beryl Rogers, on page 7 of this issue.

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD Beryl, of Prahran, Victoria, is studying at the MacRobertson Girls' High School, Melbourne, and for about three years has been earning pocket money with children's radio stories.

It must be remembered that we are not asking for stories that are a good attempt, considering how young the writers are, but for stories that reach our general publication standard.

Our Fiction Department reports:

With a few exceptions the stories submitted were well and cleanly set out, which is always an advantage and something at which all aspiring writers should aim.

The best style for setting out is on quarto-size paper, double-spaced throughout (not with extra spacing between paragraphs), and with space at the margins, top, and bottom.

The stories fell largely into two classes. One set—mostly by older writers—were well-written, but they had nothing new or intriguing in their actual story. The others were much more ambitious in their plots but too immature in their writing and general treatment.

Some stories were far too short. Make them from 1800 to 2000 words, 1800 being the minimum length.

Contributions must be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope. Your age, as well as name and address, should be given with stories submitted for our special teenage issues.

We are sorry it is never possible to give individual criticisms. However, the following writers are specially commended for their stories:

H.P. (Indooroopilly, Qld.): Very good, but far too short; a sketch rather than a short story.

V.C.B. (Summer Hill, N.S.W.), J.P. (Eskdale West, Qld.): Promising themes, but treatment far too immature.

J.L. (Kew, Vic.), C.F. (Hobart), A.H. (Wiley Park, N.S.W.), Y.W. (St. Lucia, Qld.): Good attempts at a different sort of theme, but style not up to standard.

P.J. (Kingsgrove, N.S.W.), J.R. (Traralgon, Vic.), J.H. (Earlwood, N.S.W.), V.W.J. (Warragul, Vic.), V.E. (Kingsgrove, N.S.W.): All well written, but themes not strong enough.

SCHOOLGIRL author Beryl Rogers, who received £6/6/- for her story, "Night Vigil," published on page 7 of this issue. She is the only child of Mr. and Mrs. Geoff. Rogers, of Prahran, Victoria. Her treasured typewriter was the recent gift of her grandmother, Mrs. R. Whittle.

PAIN *goes quicker with* **DISPRIN**

. . . because DISPRIN is soluble

Pain goes faster because Disprin quickly dissolves and is rapidly absorbed into the bloodstream. This is why Disprin must act faster than ordinary aspirin and a.p.c., which merely enter the stomach as undissolved particles. As Disprin is substantially neutral (non-acid), it is far less likely to cause stomach discomfort.

Disprin is obtainable from all chemists, in packages of 100, 26, and the handy 8 tablet handbag or pocket pack.

TRY THIS EXPERIMENT

Drop a Disprin tablet and ordinary aspirin or ordinary a.p.c. into separate glasses of water. See how Disprin really dissolves; see by contrast how the others merely break up. They behave differently in water: they behave differently in your stomach.

DISPRIN Regd.

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Insist on being supplied with

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They contain no Calomel or other Mercury Compounds.

AP 54/1

DANGEROUS WORK!

Selling flowers sounds pleasant work — so, where's the danger?

"My hands are in and out of cold water all day — catching chills is always a danger," says Judy Bonnar, of Irelands, Melbourne florists. "That's why I drink Bonox — keeps those chills away." Delicious Bonox pours concentrated goodness of rich, prime beef straight into your bloodstream. Gives you a "lift" and keeps your head above the 'flu line. So drink Bonox at home, at work, at the cafe, hotel or milk bar. Bonox now costs less. KB46

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Teenage section

WHEN IT'S A PARTY-DRESS NIGHT

● Here are nine dresses destined to he the teenage social life. Some are sweet sentimental, others cute or dramati "Short and full and in your favori color" is the formula for the evenin that begins early and ends up on a danc floor. It also solves the what-to-wea problem when the gang has a record playing get-together or a natter evenin Floor-length and romantic or floor length and just pretty is for the rea party with a band and engraved invita tions and your escort in white tie an tails. Take a long look at these picture use your taste and judgment, and selec the dress to suit your own party life

—*CANDY HARD*

WHO WOULDN'T take you dancing when you're wearing either of the delectable short-skirted party dresses (above)? One is carnation-pink, the other delphinium-blue—both banded at the waist in black.

GAYEST little flowers sprinkled on white cotton look cute in this very young party dress. The simple bodice has one of the new boat-shaped neck-lines. A narrow silver kid belt finishes the waist.

YOU'LL love the way the blouse (above) is styled to flatter your figure. It is made to just cover the shoulder-line, and is finished with twin bows. It's a jewel of a separate, just right for informal parties.

THE DRESS (above) is an important one for day well as evening. It has a matching waist-length jack (not shown). The oval-shaped neckline is one watch, and don't miss the centre-front kangaroo pock

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STYLED for a really gay party life is the strapless ballerina (above). The dress is made in sheer and sashed in polka-dotted silk to match the contrast on the skirt. This one is guaranteed to make you the centre of attention wherever you go.

TWO PERFECT dresses (left) for all the dance nights ahead. Disarmingly young and charming, both are made in white tulle with rustling underskirts of taffeta. Both skirts spread from a fitted waist.

SCHIAPARELLI designed the ankle-length evening dress (above) for a young girl's spring wardrobe. The dress illustrates the very new look of apricot-pink chiffon against a flower-printed cotton.

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Teenage section

Are you organised?

Do you always wait until your boy-friend knocks at the door before ironing your party dress? Do you leap out of bed in the morning with just enough time to gulp a cup of coffee before you rush to catch the bus for work?

By
JANN RYRIE

YOU do? Then you're like most people when they have just shaken off their school clothes—enthusiastically disorganised.

It's difficult to be otherwise. Even when you are older you say: It's boring to be organised. You had enough of it at school. Now's the time to relax and take things easy. Do what you want to do yourself for a change.

A box of chocolates, a good romantic novel, and all snugged up in an easy-chair is much, much better than always doing this and that at such and such a time, you say.

Who does all the work round here? you ask. Why, Mum, of course, you answer. She's been doing it for years, and, anyway, she'd much rather do it herself than waste time arguing.

That's the attitude adopted by many on their release from routine. The worst feature is you're liable to get used to this do-as-I-please idea, and, instead of overcoming it, get worse as time goes on.

The longer one has a habit the harder it is to get rid of it.

Many people probably feel that there's no great harm in being disorganised. It might make you late for a dance, or even late for work, but what's that matter so long as you're not fired? Being fired is not likely, because the boss never gets in until late, anyway.

This sort of reasoning can cause trouble. It is selfish because it inconveniences parents and friends. It is even harmful.

Take the case of Peg.

I hear she is in bed suffering from a run-down condition. Her mother tells me it's because she's so disorganised.

Could be, too. For this was her routine, and I'm sure you know many like her:

"What a heavenly evening," Peg sighs, as she drifts into her bedroom at 3 a.m., casually drops her stole, bag, and gloves on the floor, and sits by the mirror, pondering the night's outing.

"He's a wonderful dancer. A little short and dumpy, perhaps, but what's a little dumpiness when he has the most superb manners in the world? He made me feel like the Queen of Sheba.

"Gee, I hope Mum's not wild at me for rushing out without helping her wash-up. That nearly spoiled my night. Why should I have to wash-up, anyway? Mary doesn't, because her mother has a maid.

"Gosh, look at the time! I must remember to set the alarm or I'll never be able to wake up in the morning. What a dreadful thought! Don't really see why I should have to work, anyway. Mary doesn't, nor does Joan.

"Boy, wouldn't it be great to be married to Dick! Hope he asks me soon . . ."

The sun streaming through the window wakes Peg next morning.

"The sun! But it's not usually as high in the morning. Heavens, I must have forgotten to set the alarm, after all."

Peg leaps up, drops her pyjamas anywhere, jumps under the shower, rushes back into the bedroom bringing towels and water with her.

She scrambles into some clothes Mother has thoughtfully put out for her, clatters downstairs to the breakfast table.

"Mother, darling, that omelet looks really luscious, but I haven't a spare second to eat it."

"No, I don't really think she did it on purpose to show off; I think she got her schedule messed up some way."

She hurriedly downs a cup of coffee.

Peg runs down the lane, slips over on her ankle, recovers in time to limp on to the platform of a luckily timed bus. This is crowded, so she straphangs all the way.

"Got caught in the vilest traffic jam," Peg mumbles guiltily to the office manager as she settles down at her desk for a day's work.

Many days like that would make a cot-case out of anyone.

For one thing, breakfast is regarded as the most important meal of the day. It should start you off feeling fresh, glowing, and content.

You should linger over breakfast as long as you can. The slower you eat the better for your digestion.

You don't want to get like Peg, who now has to follow a dull and strict diet.

I wonder how many people plan their day, or their week, for that matter. There is nothing worse than being "over-organised," but a little sensible planning can make the world of difference to work and pleasure.

Any girl who has a lot to do knows the mess she can get into if she doesn't adopt some system for getting things done. She should make out a list, putting each job in order of urgency, then cross each item off when completed.

A sensible girl will organise herself well ahead. It's no good accepting three invitations for the one night; and it's wise to restrict your social outings to the amount of time you will comfortably have available for them.

It's silly going out just for the sake of going out, if you have a lot of work to do. Bear in mind your school training which emphasises that there is a time and place for everything.

It pays also to budget for the unexpected. Listen, for instance, to the story of Jenny.

Jenny had a habit of never worrying about her bridge until she was on the centre of them. "I'm the arty type," she used to say, "no fuss, no bother. Why worry about things until you have to? I'm good at painting—no time for anything else."

Jenny certainly could paint, and she was content to paint for hours on end, day in, day out.

She always wore her favorite corduroy tapered slacks and liked to tie her hair in a knot at the back of her head.

But Jenny was due for a surprise break.

One Saturday afternoon her room-mate, Doris, rushed in with astounding news. Some famous woman in the art world, just arrived from London, had spoken most flatteringly of Jenny's paintings at a local exhibition.

She would like to meet Jenny—would Jenny be at the reception that evening? Could they meet a little beforehand for a talk?

She implied that if Jenny's personality matched her talent there was a chance she would be chosen to go to London to represent young Australian artists at some conference or other.

Jenny was wildly excited—until she realised she had nothing suitable to wear. Her yellow dress had the hem down, the pink one had no loops for the buttons. Her only dress-up cocktail dress had been at the cleaners for weeks and the shop was now closed.

Eventually Jenny borrowed Doris' beige net—a most unbecoming color for Jenny's complexion.

She started to dress at the last moment and arrived half an hour late to meet the important visitor, looking down—and quite disorganised.

Jenny's haphazard, keep people-waiting ways proved costly. She missed out. But she learnt the lesson that there is more to being a success than having talent.

She is now getting properly organised. And who knows, if she tries hard, opportunity may call once again.

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SCARF HAT in two moods—at right, in bright printed silk for casual wear, and (left), in black organza for after-five glamor. The idea has the chic of a head-hugging cap with the practical advantages of a scarf.

Make a scarf hat

BEFORE THE KNOT is tied (above), the hat resembles a long cone. Diagram (right) shows how to cut the material.

● This new, easy-to-make hat is pretty and gay for any teenager who wants a hair cover-up that doesn't look like a scarf yet has its virtues.

YOU can make it in less than an hour and it will cost you next to nothing.

You will need a piece of material 23 inches square. Printed silk or jersey would be most suitable, but use any material you fancy.

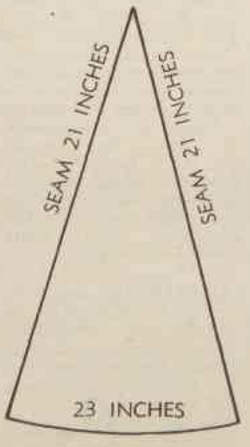
All the measurements given in the instructions allow for seams.

Method: Cut the material as shown in the diagram below, then sew together the 21in. back edges.

Make a roll of cotton-wool 22in. long and 2½in. in diameter. Join the two ends to form a circle and sew them neatly together.

Roll the bottom of the cap over the cotton-wool and stitch it firmly all round.

To complete the cap, make a knot near the top as worn by the models in the picture at the top of the page.



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Creamy-smooth powder and foundation in one!

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New — the slim ivory and gold case. Perfect for your handbag. **4/11**

Tuck your Angel Face in your handbag. Angel Face is the best beauty insurance you can carry, for a fresh and lovely look in just 5 seconds — anywhere, anytime! You have a heavenly "complexion" *complete.* And it can't spill. "It's the easiest, most flattering make-up . . . in the sweetest case that ever went into a handbag," *says Antonia Drexel Earle.*

9/6 The well-loved blue and gold box — so nicely priced.

ARF42

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ARRIVING at Prince's are Philip Bell (left), Sue Cameron, Faye Elliott, and Tim Bell, who were guests at the Palm Beach Winter Dance given by the Pacific Club. Sue wore a crimson sash with her cream taffeta dress and Faye chose watermelon-pink organza.

BACK TO THE 'TWENTIES. Mr. David Boyce bows to Mrs. Malcolm Fuller (centre) and Mrs. Boyce at the Downtown Strutters' Ball, which was held at Prince's in aid of the Royal Blind Society of New South Wales.

SOCIAL JOTTINGS

LOTS of Sydney's younger set will travel to Canberra this weekend by car, plane, and train. Their destination will be the Royal Military College, Duntroon, where four hundred guests have been invited to the annual Winter Ball this Saturday, July 10.

The usual ballroom — the gym—has been vetoed as "too cold," so dancing will be held in the cadets' messroom. I hear that decorations will follow a winter theme, with pine trees, snow scenes, and a snowman.

The new Commandant of the College, Major-General Ian Campbell, and Mrs. Campbell will attend the ball, their first at Duntroon.

Guests at the ball will include Prue Marshall, of Lindfield — her brother John is a cadet — Sue Prell, of "Ahgunyah," Crookwell, Bobbie Beetson, Judith McMillan, Marlene Robinson, and country lasses Jan Milson, Sue Powell, and Joan Kilmartin.

LETTERS to Mrs. John Roe, of Chatswood, from her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Peterson, bring news that the Petersons are now in London on their four months' world tour. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson have already visited America and the Continent, and will fly through America again on their way home in August.

• • •

A WEDDING early next year is being planned by newly engaged Patricia Framley and Michael Duffy. Patricia, who is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Framley, of North Bondi, is wearing a very pretty ring . . . it's a cluster of diamonds set in yellow gold.

THE Chapel at Wesley College, Sydney University, was chosen by Margaret Edgar for her marriage with Bruce Chartres. Margaret, who is chief scanner of the Nuclear Emulsion Group in the Physics Department at the University, wore a small white flowered hat with her grey shantung wedding dress.

• • •

ITALY, Norway, Switzerland, and Germany are on the holiday itinerary of Margaret Broome, of Roseville, who is at present in France. The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. A. Broome, Margaret is a nurse, and will return to England in September to complete a course in obstetrics.

WED AT THE PICKWICK CLUB. Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Palmer at the reception following their wedding. The bride was Loria Ramaciotti, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. S. Ramaciotti, of Vaucluse.

FROM England comes the news that Marjorie Worthington has chosen September 1 for her wedding with Peter Thorp, son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Thorp, of Kingswood, Surrey. Marjorie is the daughter of Councillor and Mrs. C. E. Worthington, of Leicester, and lived in New South Wales with her family during the war years. Marjorie's friends here, who include her old school friends from Frensham, Mittagong, will be interested to hear that a visit to Australia is well to the fore of the couple's plans.

• • •

IT'S "full speed ahead" with travel arrangements for Dr. and Mrs. Denis Rowe, of Point Piper, who will leave Australia by air at the end of August for a four months' trip overseas. Mrs. Rowe, who is English, says she is specially looking forward to seeing her family again—they haven't met for nearly three years. Dr. and Mrs. Rowe hope to return home through America.

• • •

A DEFERRED party was held last week-end for Pat Stephen, who celebrated her coming of age with a dance at Windsor Gardens. Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. James Stephen, Pat was in hospital for her birthday.

Anne

CHRISTENING. Mr. and Mrs. Bill Fennell, of Edgecliff, with their four-months-old daughter, Deborah Gai, after her christening at St. Mark's, Darling Point. Mrs. Fennell was Marian Triggs, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. O. F. Triggs.

"UNCLE SAM" welcomes Joy Hann, of Bellevue Hill, to the ball given by members of the American Society at the Trocadero to celebrate American Independence Day.

AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, Mr. Amos Peaslee, with Mrs. Peaslee (right) and their hostess, Mrs. Donald Smith, wife of the American Consul-General, at the party given at their home by Mr. and Mrs. Smith to celebrate American Independence Day.

AT RECEPTION. John Read and his attractive bride, formerly Lois Rowe, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. P. I. Rowe, of Mosman, at the Australia Hotel reception following their wedding at Blessed Sacrament Church, Mosman. Lois captained an all-women team in the 1953 Redex trial.

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WELCOME ON REDEX ROUTE

"Cover girls" of our team get special roadside cheers

All along the Redex trial route our team in car No. 200 has been greeted by housewives waving the cover of last week's issue of The Australian Women's Weekly, showing a color photograph of our team in this round-Australia car contest.

I EXPECTED to learn many things on this round-Australia car trial, but I didn't dream the three of us would be treated as cover girls.

Members of my team—myself as captain-navigator, Nan Broughton as driver, and Enid Nunn as driver-mechanic — feel that in one day we signed autographs equalling in number the total circulation of The Australian Women's Weekly.

We have scribbled our names on the cover, in autograph books, and on scraps of paper.

Housewives, in their warm-hearted way, crowded round us with their youngsters when we stopped for refuelling. By the time we reached Casino, in northern N.S.W., our barrackers were out in full array.

There, for example, after we were given cups of tea brewed over a wood fire, Mrs. Rube Schubert tossed heaps of fruit into the car, including mandarins which she said she knew we'd like, accompanied by a card bearing the verse, "Just a glad remembrance to bring some cheer to you, and wish you happiness and joy the whole way through."

As we went further north the gifts increased. A man sprang forward to hand me a pineapple. Teenage girls flung sprays of wattle through the car window, one rather large spray catching Enid on the side of the face.

Very soon the car was garlanded with flowers.

Our car, a Humber Super Snipe, was flagged out of Sydney Showground promptly at 6.15 on July 3 on the start of its trip in the 1954 Redex trial.

Sitting beside Nan, who drove at the beginning, I clutched folders, instructions, and maps, had a notebook and pen handy, and also a light with which to read maps.

Neither Nan nor our driver-mechanic, Enid Nunn, appeared nervous, but, whether I looked it or not, I certainly was.

However, once along the Pacific Highway, we relaxed and heard for the first time the tooting of horns to wish us luck and cries of "Good on you, girls!" and "Come on, Narda!"

We named our car "Narda" after the heroine of The Australian Women's Weekly comic strip. Following us out of Sydney Showground two minutes later was entry No. 201, named "Mandrake" by its captain, Dick Hamilton, of Tullebudgera, Queensland, who chose the name of the comic strip's hero when he learned his car's number was to be next to ours.

> ● *By staff reporter HELEN FRIZELL, who is captain-navigator of our car in the Redex trial.*

Bonfires lit by groups of teenagers staying up to see the cars go by gave most Redex contestants bad frights, as we were expecting the fires to be warnings of secret controls or positions where officials would check the average time taken over a stated stretch of road.

As navigator of one of the two all-women teams in the trial, I have the job of estimating the average speed and mileage—a task which is not easy for one who is no mathematician.

I realised also that if my calculations were wrong, the team would lose points, but, by frantic watch-checking, plus twirling a circular, calculating gadget, we made Rockhampton without losing points, clocking in to each control point at the stated time, even although once or twice it was by a mere whisker.

Enid and Nan took turns at driving, Enid stopping near Gosford, her home town, to kiss her mother good-bye and to receive a beautiful cold roast chicken, which we soon dismembered.

With the car heater going it was not cold, but we judged it must be in the open air, where cheering groups, well rugged up, waved us along.

The worst moment of the first lap from Sydney came when I, fumbling round to switch on the map-reading light, fused the works with a metal fountain-pen cap. This included the horn.

Hastily pasting paper over an ordinary torch so the driver was not blinded with a powerful glare, I managed to follow the route until after the next control point, where we had time to repair the damage.

Moving towards Brisbane in a long procession went the Redex trial cars, the men in them wearing knitted caps, thick sweaters, and boiler suits, and some of them with beards. Beyond Taree we ran into rain, and soon mud was thrown over the glossy cars, smearing brightly painted advertisements and obscuring windscreens.

By dawn, near Urunga, there was beautiful scenery, low-lying fog, blackened, ring-barked trees, and distant mountains.

Youngsters in pyjamas waved from homes and others stood on platforms used for milk cans, calling out greetings in shrill voices. At Coffs Harbor we met the first reception group, bearing steaming mugs of beef-tea and also autograph books.

Half-way through the border gates between N.S.W. and Queensland, "Narda" was mobbed by pretty girls, who called, "Welcome to sunny Queensland," meanwhile handing us lovely camellia blossoms and packets of sweets.

Although I appreciated all this, I was forced sometimes to toot the horn to move aside the gift-bearers plus autograph hunters when the delay would have cost points. Also, the crowds sometimes blocked the progress of the Redex cars behind us. It was interesting along the route to hear of cars which had taken alternative routes being bogged down in mud. Our team all felt relieved we had stuck to the bitumen highway.

CHECKING IN (above) at Brisbane control point are members of our team. Helen Frizell (foreground) and Enid Nunn sign forms while Nan Broughton looks on.

We noticed car 201, "Mandrake," always left the control points two minutes after us. The way things were, we never knew whether "Mandrake" was chasing "Narda" or vice versa.

There was a very friendly spirit as cars passed and repassed each other, usually with horn tooting.

At controls the procedure is for our driver to halt just short of the control table while I must check our Breitling stop-watch, lent to us by J. Farren Price, with the official timepiece. When right on the tick of time the car is signalled in.

Our drivers switched duty every couple of hours, the one off duty trying to relax at the back of the car under a coat pulled up like a blanket.

Although the drive from Sydney to Brisbane took nearly 23½ hours, neither Enid nor Nan showed signs of weariness during the journey.

Only after checking in at the control point at Brisbane Exhibition Ground did we feel tired and unlike the cover-girls of the first lap of our journey.

For us the Redex trial started in a wonderful way. We know we have barrackers waiting to hear about our progress, so the three of us intend working as hard as possible to make that progress good.

CAPTAINS MEET. Dick Hamilton, of Tullebudgera, Queensland, captain of car No. 201, named "Mandrake," greets Helen Frizell, captain of our car, No. 200, named "Narda." Both names were taken from the comic-strip characters.

MANY telegrams and messages of good wishes have been sent to our Redex team. One of our readers, Mrs. O. E. Bridle, of "Maramingo," Genoa, Victoria, has offered typical country hospitality.

Writing to wish the team good luck, she says: "If your route should bring you past my door on the Prince's Highway at Genoa, you are invited to drop in for a cup of tea, if you have time . . .

"We would feel honored if you should call in and will keep the kettle boiling in case you do."

BEARDED COMPETITOR Rod Fraser, of Glen Innes, N.S.W., is watched by admiring crowds as he signs autographs in Brisbane. He is co-driver with Col McLoughlan.

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c. Summerlon Nylon Princess Slip P.S.904. Nylon allover lace brassiere top, nylon allover inserts and edge of hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 76/6
36"-38" ... 79/6
40"-42" ... 84/-

d. Summerlon Nylon Princess Slip P.S.907. Nylon alencon motifs appliqued on net brassiere top, nylon alencon motifs at hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 97/6
36"-38" ... 102/6

e. Summerlon Nylon Halfslip H.S.902. Nylon and lace with permanently pleated nylon net hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory.

Seat Sizes: 36"-38" ... 77/6
40"-42" ... 81/6

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f. Summersilk Princess Slip P.S.268. Allover needlerun lace spiral bustline, net edging on hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory and Amber.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 35/6
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g. Summersilk Princess Slip P.S.270, with ribbon lace insertion at neck and hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 39/6
36"-38" ... 42/6
40"-42" ... 45/6

h. Summersilk Princess Slip P.S.264, with needlerun allover lace bustline and scalloped needlerun lace hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 49/3
36"-38" ... 52/6

j. Summersilk Princess Slip P.S.269. Wide lace-edged bust and hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory and Powderblue.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 33/6
36"-38" ... 36/6

k. Summersilk Princess Slip P.S.267. Alencon motifs appliqued at bust and hemline. *Colours:* Sunglow, Ivory and Powderblue.

Bust Sizes: 32"-34" ... 42/6
36"-38" ... 45/6
40"-42" ... 49/6

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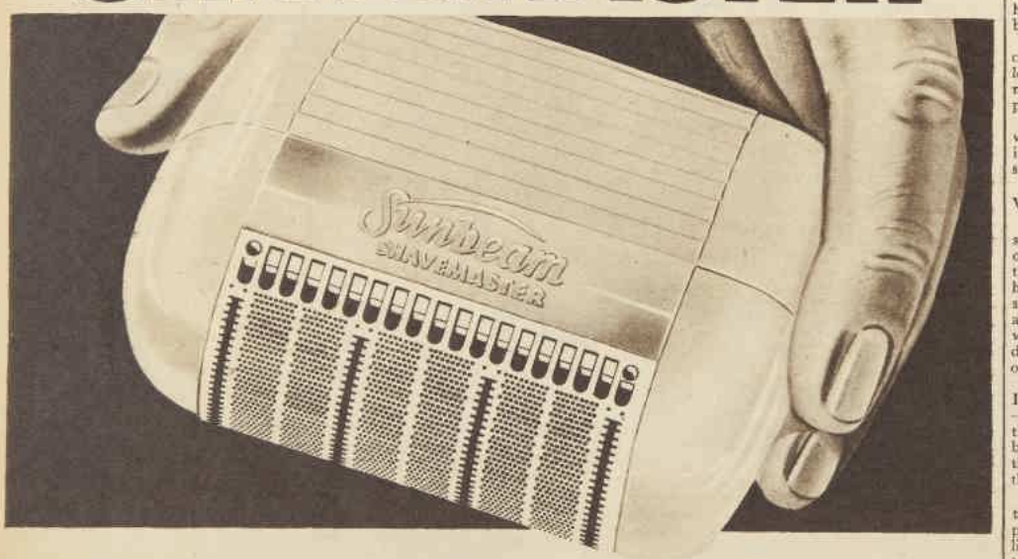

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FROM Sunbeam DEALERS EVERYWHERE

Continuing . . . Aftermath

from page 3

face gave her a queer feeling. She turned to her father. His face was thoughtful.

"What your mother means," he said, "is that you want to be sure of him this time."

Val hadn't expected this at all. They were just as—as intolerant as Chris. "But, Dad, you've always said that everyone is entitled to his one big mistake. Matt was honest enough to see his—and to admit it."

"I just don't want to see you make your big mistake unnecessarily."

He reached across the corner of the table and covered her hand. "To coin a phrase, let's look at the record.

"You've always built your life around Matt, all your hopes and dreams for the future. You had every reason to believe that you were the centre of his life. Yet"—involuntarily he frowned towards the Bennett house—"the very first time he was away from you for any length of time he became infatuated with another girl.

"And now he comes running back to you and expects you to forgive and forget and go on as though nothing had happened!"

"It isn't that way at all." Anger roughened the edges of Val's voice. "It's not as though nothing had happened. We're—we're sort of—starting over."

"Good," Mr. Randolph said. "Maybe this is all to the good. Maybe his experience with Fay will convince Matt as nothing else could that you are the right one for him."

Val knew that her father meant well; so did her mother and Chris. They were trying to protect her from being hurt again.

After breakfast they settled down to the Sunday papers as usual. When Val had exhausted that, she sat in the living-room looking out at the rain. Last night she and Matt had talked about the beach for this afternoon. She'd phone Matt and they'd change their plans—perhaps a drive over to Martinsburg.

Then she realised she couldn't phone Matt. It would look as though she were running after him. It was his place to call her . . .

She was making her bed when the phone rang. She knew it was Matt and started for the stairs, then turned back.

When Chris called up to her, Val was careful not to hurry.

"Hi," Matt said, and the sound of his quiet voice coming over the wire as it had so many thousands of times before made her heart pound. "Rain's stopped," he said, "but it looks as if the beach is out. I was wondering—would you like to drive to Martinsburg for some of Mrs. Allen's chicken?"

"Why, that's exactly what I've been thinking! Great minds—" Suddenly Val laughed and the restraint was gone, erased by their closeness, their way of thinking the same thoughts at the same time.

When they were through talking she turned from the phone and looked into the living-room, feeling somehow triumphant; but no one said, "What's the big deal for this afternoon?" or "Bring Matt home for Sunday-night supper." Val walked slowly up the stairs.

She was still in her room when she heard Matt back his car out of the garage next door and stop it in the drive. She picked up her bag and hurried downstairs in time to answer the door.

"Hi," he said. "All set?"

She nodded. She wished they could just get into the car and drive away, but she knew Matt wouldn't. She saw him look over her head. "Come in for a minute?" she said unreasily, and followed him into the living-room.

"Hello, Mr. Randolph," he said. "How are you, Mrs. Randolph?"

"Hello, Matt," her father said. Her mother smiled nervously and said hello.

There was a silence. It couldn't have been more than a few seconds, but it seemed like minutes. Val noticed that Chris had left the room before Matt came.

"We were going swimming, but—" Matt made a motion towards the wet outside.

"So we're going over to Allen's at Martinsburg for dinner." Red crept up Matt's neck and into the roots of his light hair, and sympathy crowded out the irritation Val had felt.

"Nice place," Mr. Randolph said. "Good food."

Val moved towards the door. "We'd better get started; we haven't reservations."

They drove in silence for a while. They had always been able to talk freely about anything; but what had just happened in the living-room — because it had to do with Fay — lay between them now, a barrier of restraint where there had never been restraint before.

But as they drove through the countryside, familiar landmarks, shared memories, started the flow of talk. By the time they had covered the fifty miles to Martinsburg it seemed to Val that it was almost as it had always been.

As they turned into the long cinder lane that led to the farmhouse restaurant, Val said, "My mouth's watering; I hope Mrs. Allen hasn't lost her touch." She hadn't been here since the spring Sunday before Matt went away.

"She hasn't," Matt assured her. "It's the same tender chicken."

Val turned her head away, feeling a stab of jealousy. He'd been here recently, then. With Fay, of course.

Mrs. Allen's chicken, gravy, and biscuits were as wonderful as ever. Under the stimulus of good food and cheerful, familiar surroundings they talked and laughed again. It was a pleasant enough meal, but it was like skating on a pond with a hole in the middle of the ice. You were safe as long as you never forgot it was there.

They made the long drive back home slowly, as they usually did. Then Matt turned off on Main Street instead of continuing through town. She looked at him inquiringly.

"It's Fred and Evalyn Raab's anniversary," Matt explained, "and they're having the crowd over. He rang me on Thursday and I almost forgot."

Thursday. Fay was here then; he had accepted, intending to take her. But now Fay was gone, so he was going to take Val instead. Convenient, wasn't it?

"I thought you'd enjoy stopping for a while. Most of the old gang will be there."

She put her hand on his arm as he turned off the ignition. "I'd rather not go, Matt."

"What?"

"I'd rather not go."

"But why, Val? They're all people you like. We won't stay late if you're tired."

He didn't understand. He had no appreciation of what he had done to her. Her voice came out sharply: "I just don't want to go."

"But they're expecting us!"

"They're not expecting us," she said. "It's Fay they're expecting, not me!"

"I thought we'd been all over that, Val," he said stiffly. "I've tried to explain how it was. I've admitted I was wrong; I've apologised. What more can I do?"

So now he expects you to go on as though nothing had happened. She turned away, her eyes stinging. "Nothing at all.

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WHEN KIDNEYS WORK TOO OFTEN

Are you embarrassed by too frequent elimination during the day and night? These symptoms, as well as Bladder Irritation, Backache, Swollen Ankles, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Dizziness, Lumbago, Broken Sleep, Circles Under Eyes are usually due to germ-caused kidney and bladder troubles. The first dose of Cystex, the new scientific medicine, goes right to work overcoming troubles in 3 ways. 1. Kills germs causing trouble. 2. Gets rid of poisonous acids. 3. Strengthens and reinvigorates kidneys and bladder. Get Cystex from chemist to-day under guarantee satisfaction or money back.

"Oo-hoo! Anyone want to help with the washing-up?"

"I am helping. I work fast durin' th' commercials . . ."

It seems to me

By Dorothy Drain

MR. DONALD PEERS, the plump, middle-aged Welsh singer who draws an audience of 12 million listeners on his B.B.C. radio sessions, was "launched" at a cocktail party when he arrived in Sydney.

Nowadays there are two accepted methods of introducing celebrities to the Press. One is the "Press conference." This is reserved usually for people on the serious side.

The Press sits around on hard chairs and asks hard questions such as: "What do you think of the situation in Guatemala?" No refreshments are served, wisely enough. Celebrity and questioners are working too hard at being intelligent to risk muddling their minds.

You might say that the guide followed by publicity agents is: the drier the subject, the drier the party.

The other, used for actors and actresses and such popular figures, is the jam-packed cocktail party, where you grab the guest of honor, if you can, and ask easy questions such as (to Mr. Peers), "Is it true that you have to have your coat buttons sewn on with extra thread because fans tear them off?"

* * *

MR. PEERS is a very nice little man. To call anyone a nice little man sounds patronising, but Donald Peers, besides being amiable, is shrewd.

He remarked, "I'm only a little fellow," as he stood on a chair to make his speech. He is around five feet six inches tall, is 45 years of age, has a daughter of 22, and didn't hit the big time until he was approaching middle age, although he had been singing, obscurely, for 20 years.

He has black hair going grey, and wore a dark suit of conservative cut, with a yellow-bordered waistcoat-cardigan underneath it.

When you ask him a question, he grasps your hand, gazes at you, and answers it in a way calculated to make you the envy of his millions of fans. If there are two female questioners at once, he may very likely grasp a hand each.

Incidentally, he says it's not entirely true about those buttons. "What happens," he explains, "is that you might be going into a concert hall and someone grabs your handkerchief, or your tie, and then kind people like yourself write it up and it sounds very good."

Personally, I think Mr. Peers is being a little modest there. If a fan wrenches a tie from round a celebrity's neck, the atmosphere must be pretty ardent.

What is his own favorite song?

"I usually say, 'My latest and most successful record'," he said, "but the one I am especially fond of is the one I've sung for so many years—'In a Shady Nook'."

There was some discussion on the sidelines of the party as to whether Mr. Peers' fans in Britain were teenagers or older women.

Someone told me that audience pictures show ladies from 16 to 60.

Mr. Peers himself settled the question. A man asked him frivolously, "What is a teenager, Donald?"

"A teenager," said Donald, "is anyone who is one of my fans. And anyone who is one of my fans is a teenager."

THE fact that Mars has been unusually close to the earth made me accept an invitation to accompany a star-gazing friend to Sydney Observatory this month.

When the astronomers say "close" they mean 40 million miles, which shows how relative are words.

Owing to the publicity that Mars gets in relation to the rest of the firmament, I had expected that the audience for the evening lecture would be all ardent Martians.

However, it turned out that this was one of the regular evening lectures at the Observatory, which the held for the public four nights a week.

On this night the audience was almost exclusively female.

Consequently, there was, on the whole, an atmosphere of proper feminine awe about the whole subject of astronomy.

It was quite a long time before we thawed sufficiently to ask questions. The sight of Saturn with its rings, and the information that Saturn had nine moons, enlivened us.

I was entranced to learn that, if it were possible to live on Saturn, it would be possible to see at times the nine moons all at once.

However, the lecturer was discouraging on the subject of life on other planets.

He mentioned the lack of oxygen on Mars, described the atmosphere of another planet as resembling poisonous marsh gas.

But wouldn't it be conceivable, I asked, that there would be some form of life which would LIKE poisonous marsh gas?

The lecturer, with admirable self-control, replied patiently that you could imagine anything you liked, but that such imaginings were in the realm of comic-strip thought.

Sticking strictly to what one can observe, therefore, I noted that Mars, as seen by me through the Sydney Observatory telescope, has a violet haze round its edge. Otherwise it is not very spectacular. Not a sign of any little green men or flying saucers.

* * *

AN Indian student, Mr. G. S. Shrikantia, working at Sydney University Nuclear Research Laboratory, recently discovered what is described as "a new fundamental particle, a possible vital link in the riddle of what holds the atom nucleus together." Mr. Shrikantia said that he could not afford to be too elated. "Scientific research would become such a jolly thing, whereas it is extremely arduous," he added.

A businessman can evoke a delighted squeal
By saying, "Darling, I've just pulled off a big deal."
But very, very few people understand what is a new particle
Even after reading a long article.
And should the discoverer rush up to a man in the street and cry, "What do you know,
I've just found a new thing about the atom,"
the answer is likely to be "Oh."
So there isn't much danger of scientists falling into the folly
Of being jolly.

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GRANDMA DOES A BIG WASH EVERY DAY!

Says
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make washing easier

Mrs. D. Poelitz, of Annandale, N.S.W., has at least two big lines full of washing, not just once or twice a week, but every *day*. This modern grandmother does all the washing for her own and her daughter's family who live with her.

With five adults, two lively little boys and a 12-months-old baby in the household, washing piles up all the time. Ask Mrs. Poelitz how she takes it all so calmly and she points to a large packet of Rinso. She works to a system — towels and linen one day, personal clothing the next, and so on. Her whites are always dazzling white, coloureds brighter than new. And when it comes to washing-up those same thicker, richer Rinso suds make short work of the big stack of dirty dishes. No slow old-fashioned bar soap for this modern family! Mrs. Poelitz and her daughter have proved that Rinso is best for everything — whites, coloureds, dishes!

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Continuing . . . Aftermath

from page 30

just take me home and then do as you please!"

Almost the next moment she was sorry. Not about the party—but she needn't have flared up so. Always they had been able to talk things out reasonably. That had been one of the wonderful things about them. She was sorry and she would tell him . . .

Matt stopped the car in front of her house and came around to open the door on her side. As she leaned forward to get out she saw his face clearly. Against the grim set of his jaw she could not say she was sorry. She said, "You needn't bother walking to the house with me."

She was glad no one was home and she dropped into a chair in the dark living-room. It was early, just after nine o'clock, but she was tired. She didn't know how long she sat there, but when she heard a car in the drive and voices she went up to her room.

They came noisily into the house—Chris, and, yes, Jack tonight, and another couple. Val remembered how Chris had said, not long ago, "I envy you. You've always known Matt was for you. But me—first it's Pete, then Jack, or Bert. How'll I ever be sure when it's the right one?"

And out of her smugness Val had said, "When you're in love you'll be sure."

She was not sure now. She was angry and hurt and tired—and not sure of Matt or of herself or of anything.

Matt didn't call the next day. She had half expected him to phone her at the bank, where she was her father's secretary. After dinner, Val suggested that she and Chris go to the pictures.

Chris grinned approvingly. "Playing hard to get, eh?"

Val smiled and said nothing.

On Tuesday Matt didn't call, either. Or Wednesday. She knew her parents were wondering what had happened, and she also knew they wouldn't ask.

Thursday, after dinner, Val went into the backyard. She was clipping the hedge when she heard the Bennetts' back screen door close in the way Matt always let it slam. She was turned slightly away so he wouldn't get the idea she was deliberately begging for his attention, yet she was still half facing in his direction. All he had to do was walk up to her.

She saw him come down the back steps, but he strode unwaveringly to his car parked in the drive. She knew by the way he kept his eyes straight ahead of him that he had seen her. She turned her back all the way, and heard his car drive off.

When some of the sting went out of her eyes and some of the hotness out of her face, she went into the house and told them about the quarrel.

She told them how he had just assumed she would go to the Raabs' party, not caring that it would be humiliating to her; and how she had gone out of her way to give him a chance to speak to her now, and he had ignored her. "We're through," she finished, "unless he comes down to earth!"

"What you need," Chris pronounced sagely, out of the wisdom of her fifteen years, "is another boy-friend. He's not the only fish in the sea."

That struck Val as amusing and she smiled in spite of herself. "Who, for instance?"

"Well, you could try—instead of mooning over him."

Her mother said, "I'm sorry, Val, it isn't the way you hoped it would be. But you're upset. Give time a chance to work it out."

TIME didn't work anything out; it just made things worse. Sometimes she was on the verge of picking up the phone and calling him; but she was always stopped by the memory of the way he had ignored her.

And when she would see him driving in or out, never glancing at her house, she was glad she hadn't humiliated herself again.

She went through the days with a hard tautness inside. Nothing was right.

There was an undercurrent of tension at home. Val felt it most when they faced one another around the dinner table.

One Saturday evening, while Val was getting ready for bed, Chris burst into her room breathlessly. "Val!" she cried excitedly. "You know the Country Club dance is two weeks from tonight—"

"I hadn't thought about it." She and Matt had never missed it, since they were old enough to go to dances.

"Well — you know Marge Cruikshank—her father's head of the hospital. Well, there's a new doctor on the staff and he's staying at Cruikshanks' until he gets settled—and, Val, he's a perfect dreamboat! Well, the second I saw him I said to myself, 'That's for Val!'

"And right away I asked Marge if he had a date for the dance yet, and she said he hadn't, and I told her not to introduce him to a soul in town until I talked to you!" She stopped, waiting for Val's reaction.

"Why not?" she said. "Maybe a doctor is just what I need!"

Chris dashed downstairs and called Marge, and dashed back up and said that it was all set, and tomorrow afternoon, when the Cruikshanks were taking Dr. George Ramsey around to introduce him to people, they would stop in.

When she saw the Cruikshanks and the new doctor coming up the path the next afternoon her palms were wet and her mouth dry. But after they came in she surprised herself by being friendly and at ease. In fact, she decided, after the first fifteen minutes, you couldn't be anything *else* but friendly and at ease with George Ramsey.

He had none of Matt's reserve with new people, but neither was he bold. He was just natural and relaxed.

As they were leaving he asked her to have dinner with him the next evening. She hesitated, and it was Chris' gleeful grin in the background that decided her. And she did have a nice time.

When he brought her home he said, his eyes smiling, "I'm going to like it here, Val." She went out with him on Saturday night and saw him twice during the week.

So by the night of the dance George was no longer a blind date. She dressed for it with a sense of excitement she had not expected to feel. Matt was not at the dance. Afterwards, very late, on the dark front porch, George drew her close to him and she let him kiss her.

She saw him almost every night for a week, and one morning at breakfast she said, "Dad, would you mind if I took my vacation? I want to go up to Aunt Libby's for a couple of weeks."

He raised his head quickly, and she saw the surprise on her mother's face and on Chris', too.

Her hands were clenched in her lap. "Last night George asked me to marry him—but I've got to be sure."

Aunt Libby was a cousin of Mrs. Randolph's mother, but they had always called her "Aunt." She was a peppery, outspoken woman in her seventies, who had insisted on running the farm after her husband's death five years ago, instead of selling it as everyone advised, and enjoying freedom from responsibilities.

They all drove up on Sunday, and Aunt Libby, of course, insisted that they stay for dinner. Mrs. Randolph helped her in the kitchen and Val, Chris, and their father wandered around

To page 34

★ As I read the stars ★ By EVE HILLIARD ★

ARIES (March 21 - April 20): Any undertaking connected with the home, begun on the morning of July 14, should prosper and bring much satisfaction. July 18 favors hospitality.

TAURUS (April 21-May 20): Social or business activity, probably in your own neighborhood, could produce surprising results, July 14. The week-end is ideal for little journeys.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21): July 14 is likely to defeat all your efforts. People, situations, are difficult; with the best will in the world, you cannot influence events before July 19, which is your big moment.

CANCER (June 22-July 22): Coming to a decision, July 15, you may encounter unforeseen obstacles, July 16, but, undeterred, carry off a triumph, July 19, in a personal matter.

LEO (July 23-August 22): An extraordinary opportunity may present itself, July 13, probably of a business nature. Quick action will be needed; weigh well the disadvantages, July 16.

VIRGO (August 23 - September 23): July 17 could be the turning point in your relationship with an individual or a group. Should a door swing shut, then July 19 will open another.

LIBRA (September 24-October 23): A permanent arrangement concluded July 15 should give a social or financial boost, but be careful to avoid reckless statements, July 19.

SCORPIO (October 24-November 22): Events below the surface are agreeable to your plans, with July 13 providing a clue worth following up. Accidents, especially falls, are possible, July 18.

SAGITTARIUS (November 23-December 20): Don't take chances in personal safety, love, or money, July 15. July 19 may show a business profit.

CAPRICORN (December 21-January 19): Co-operation with friends, associates, family, is the July 14 keynote, bringing much happiness.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 19): Obliged to wipe out your plans, July 16, on account of the expense involved? You can find something better, within your reach, July 17.

PISCES (February 20-March 20): Whatever your project, July 13 smiles on it. Any setback, July 15, is temporary. July 18 romantic.

[The Australian Women's Weekly presents this astrological diary as a feature of interest only, without accepting any responsibility whatever for the statements contained in it.]

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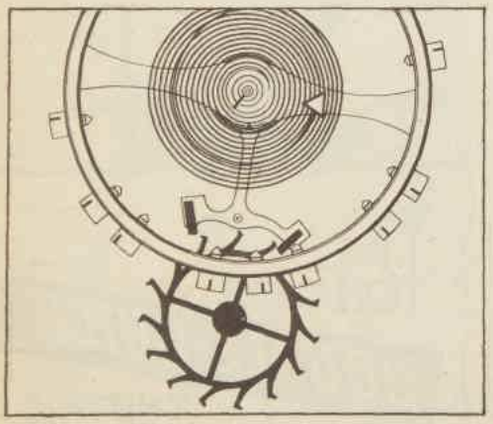

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THE WATCHMAKERS OF SWITZERLAND

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Continuing . . . Aftermath

from page 33

outside. Val thought of all the wonderful times she'd had there as a child. There had been no dark doubts about anything then, the present or the future.

After the dinner dishes were done, Mr. and Mrs. Randolph and Chris left for town. Sitting on the wide front porch, Val and Aunt Libby watched the car disappear down the road towards the main highway.

It had no more than gone out of sight when Aunt Libby said, in her direct way, "So you came up here to take a good long look at the two of 'em, eh?"

Val had been absently watching the road. She turned her head quickly. "Mother told you?" She added firmly, "No, just at one of them. I'm no longer interested in looking at Matt."

"That's too bad," Aunt Libby said. "I always liked him. Why not?"

"Why not?" Val stared at Aunt Libby. "Mother must have told you that!"

"So it boils down to this doctor—you're just trying to figure if marrying him would be a wise move."

Val's face colored. "I almost said yes, and I think I will. I just want to be sure."

The old lady spoke without looking at Val: "I don't know of much you can be real sure of in this world, outside of death and taxes."

The days went pleasantly and Val hoped that at seventy-three she'd be half the woman Aunt Libby was. The old lady supervised the two farmhands with a firm hand, making decisions without hesitation, and the men respected her. No one could imagine her being a door-mat for anyone.

The two weeks passed so swiftly that the Saturday on which her parents were to drive up for her arrived almost as a surprise.

"The trouble with vacations," Val said, sitting on the cool porch with Aunt Libby after lunch, "is that they always end too soon. I would like another two weeks of this."

"That's a queer way for a girl to talk who's going back to get herself engaged—or aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm going to marry George."

"You're pretty calm about it. I can remember being sort of excited when I knew Ed was getting close to popping the question."

Val smiled. "I'm very happy about it, Aunt Libby. I'll have a good life with George. He's a fine, gentle, understanding man—"

"Sounds more like you were sizing up a horse than a husband—Don't you love him?"

Val blinked at the abruptness of the question. "Why—why, of course!"

"Like you love Matt?"

Val's cheeks flamed. "I'm not concerned with him."

"What makes you so sure?"

"He made sure of that!" she said, her resentment turning perversely against Aunt Libby. "He made that perfectly obvious when I stood out there in the yard like a fool waiting for him. I went more than halfway!"

Aunt Libby said quietly, "Why didn't you go all the way?"

"All the way!" Why did old people insist on handing out advice they would never follow themselves? "All the way — when the whole thing was caused by him in the first place! Would you?"

"Ed and I were together for forty-seven years, and they were good years. But no two people worth their salt can help disagreeing once in a while, or hurting each other. I wish I had a pound for every time I made the first move to patch up a little quarrel before it got to be a big one."

"You? Humbling yourself to keep peace!"

"I never humbled myself before Ed—and I never tried to humble him. I couldn't stand a meek man. But when a quarrel gets to a point where it's pride against pride, with neither side willing to budge, that's when it gets bitter and dangerous. Somebody's got to make that first little move, Val, and it's easier for you than for Matt."

"I don't see why—it was his fault in the first place!"

"Fault!" Aunt Libby snorted. "It's not a question of whose fault it is. It's whether you love Matt enough to put his mistakes of the past behind you. If you do, it's up to you to show him that you trust him.

"Matt's like most men. He's been trained to bottle up his feelings, so when a quarrel is deadlocked he doesn't know what to do about it. But a woman isn't hampered by that nonsense. She can win for both of them, Val, by seeming to surrender."

"I don't intend to go through life taking the blame for things just to pamper his silly malego."

"Who said anything about taking blame? Just show him you have faith in him by being friendly."

"But I stood out there in the yard and he wouldn't even look!"

"Did you look at him? I'll bet you stood there looking like you'd just taken a bite out of a lemon."

"All he had to do was to walk up to me; after all, I have some pride, too!"

There was sharpness in Aunt Libby's voice: "Maybe I'm just old-fashioned and unemancipated, but I've never been too proud to be a woman!" She got up abruptly.

Val went into the house. She passed the phone in the hall and told herself that she ought to call George right now and tell him she would marry him. That would be something definite to end this indecision. But why should she be undecided? She had thought everything through and made up her mind.

She began to pack her bag. She would have a good life with George. He wasn't tightly strung and stubborn like Matt. She thought how relaxed and free from tension it would be, married to him . . .

The long-distance operator said, "Please hold the line. I'll have your party in a moment."

She stared numbly at the mouthpiece. The unreasoning impulse that had driven her, running, down the stairs was gone and now she was afraid. She had started in motion forces that she couldn't stop, and she realised now that it was a mistake.

"Hello."

Val gripped the phone, tongue-tied. How could she begin? What if his voice, when he heard her, turned cold.

"Hello?" he said again.

"Matt—" It was the faintest whisper. "Oh, Matt—I'm at Aunt Libby's!" Then her throat choked up entirely and she couldn't say another word.

"Val? Val!" His voice leaped eagerly at her, like something that had been imprisoned and now was free. "I'll come right out, I'll be there in less than an hour. Wait for me, Val!"

She felt the forty miles between them, everything else between them, melt away — and suddenly, like a miracle, they were close again.

"I'll wait—" They wouldn't always be this close, not always. There would be other times when anger and pride would rise up between them, forcing them apart. But never, she knew, very far apart or for very long. "I'll wait," she said. "I won't go away—" And now her voice was warm and eager, and unafraid.

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Film Fan-Fare

CONDUCTED BY M. J. McMAHON

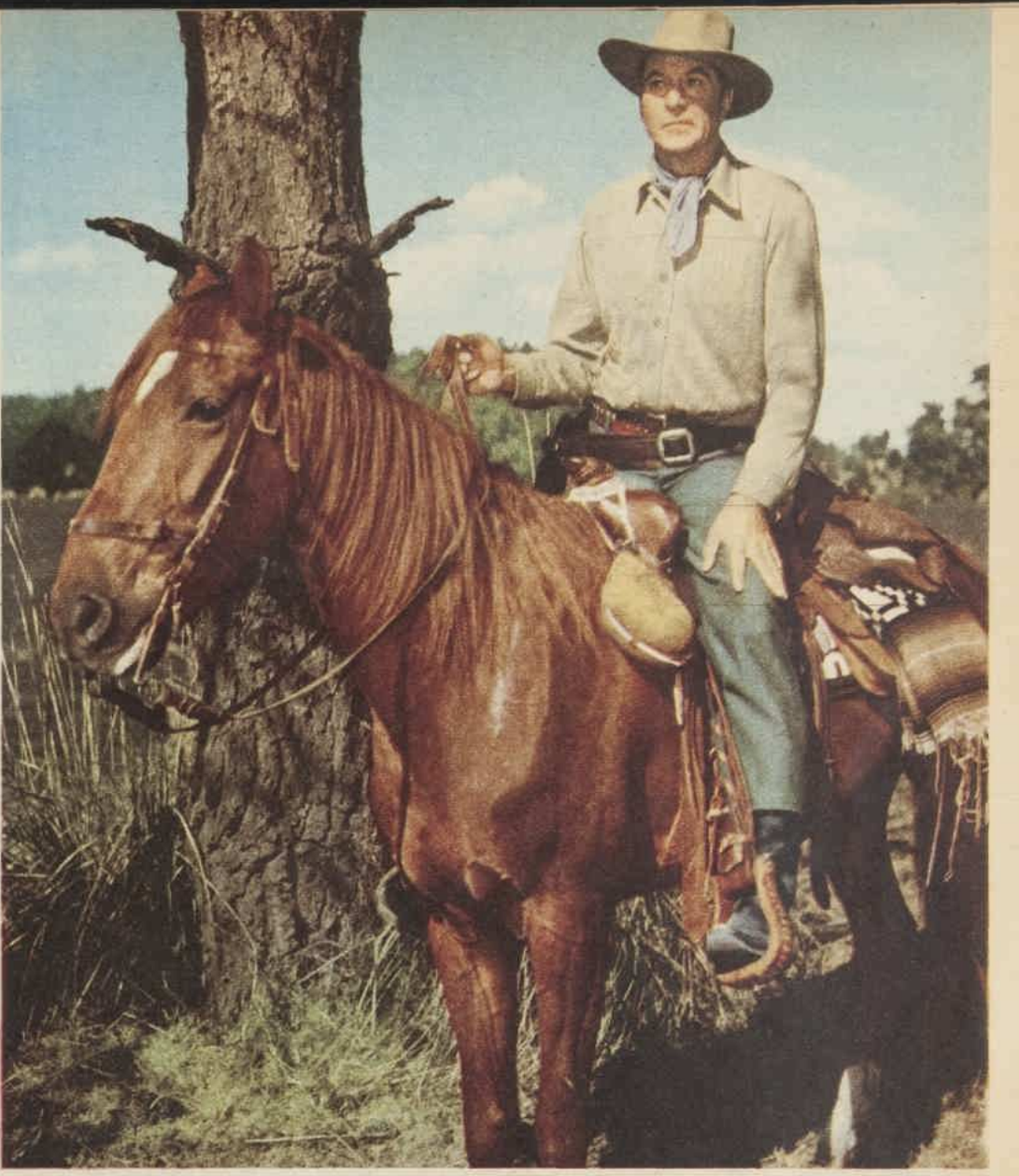
Mexican Adventure

★ Gold fever grips four strangers in Fox's period Western "Garden of Evil." They are an American woman (Susan Hayward) and three soldiers of fortune, played by Gary Cooper, Richard Widmark, and Cameron Mitchell.

SUSAN hires the three men to escort her across dangerous Indian country to a distant goldmine. On the way the men conspire to steal the mine and the woman holds the upper hand with a six-shooter. "Garden of Evil" was filmed in Mexico in technicolor and CinemaScope.

During three arduous months of location work, the film unit operated from four main bases in Mexico City and Acapulco, Uruapan and Guanajuato. The cast members travelled thousands of miles by aeroplane, by car and caravan to reach the back country.

Scenic highlights include picturesque colonial townships and ancient villages. Panoramic cameras show coconut and banana jungles along the Los Concheros River, and forbidding volcanic terrain around Paricutin Mountain is used as background.



GARY COOPER (right) lopes through the part of a strong, silent ex-sheriff from Texas in "Garden of Evil." It's an action role in which there is plenty of Western-style fist and gun fighting as well as romance.

VICTOR MENDOZA (below, back to camera), a Mexican adventurer, demonstrates his strength to film characters. They are Richard Widmark (left), Gary Cooper, Susan Hayward, and Cameron Mitchell.

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Talking of Films

By M. J. McMAHON

★★ *War of the Worlds*

PARAMOUNT'S screen version of the H. G. Wells science-fiction thriller "War of the Worlds" gives the story a new location in Southern California as well as suitable atom-age twists.

Between them author Wells, producer George Pal, director Byron Haskin, and the six-man team that works wonders on the special-effects side of the film turn out as ingenious a strip of colorful horror as you could expect to see on celluloid.

The human story that goes along with these technical effects is undistinguished.

What is thought to be a meteor shooting across the California sky turns out to be a Martian space-machine equipped with a death-ray antenna. From the start there is no mistaking its warlike purpose.

More and more of these death-dealing machines land at various points around the globe, throwing the populace into terror-stricken flight as scientists and Service chiefs are alerted to begin combat.

The story swings into high with the discovery that the world's newest and most potent weapons of war—even the A-bomb—are useless against the invulnerable Martians.

Incidentally, the only visible evidence of the Martians themselves is a glimpse or two of an attenuated limb with claw-like fingers. A pity for those who, like myself, would have liked a close look at the invincible men from Mars.

However, in the final attack on San Francisco they are struck down in a way that leaves them too weak to wave an antenna or raise a whir on the sound-track.

Bespectacled Gene Barry plays a vague scientist, and Ann Robinson is the girl with whom he shares an uncomfortable romance.

A suitable commentary is spoken by Sir Cedric Hardwicke.

In Sydney—Capitol.

CITY FILM GUIDE

Films reviewed

CAPITOL.—★★ "War of the Worlds," science-fiction drama in color, starring Gene Barry, Ann Robinson. (See review this page.) Plus ★ "Pony Express," color Western, starring Charlton Heston, Jan Sterling.

CENTURY.—★★ "The Moon Is Blue," comedy, starring William Holden, David Niven, Maggie McNamara. Plus featurettes.

EMBASSY.—★★ "Father's Doing Fine," technicolor comedy, starring Richard Attenborough, Heather Thatcher, Virginia McKenna. Plus ★★ "The Yellow Balloon," drama, starring Kathleen Ryan, William Sylvester, Andrew Ray.

ESQUIRE.— "Appointment in Honduras," color thriller, starring Glenn Ford, Ann Sheridan, Zachary Scott. Plus "Desert Passage," a Tim Holt Western.

LIBERTY.—★★★ "Anchors Aweigh," technicolor musical, starring Gene Kelly, Kathryn Grayson, Frank Sinatra. (Re-release.) Plus featurettes.

LYCEUM.—★★★ "The Queen in Australia," official Commonwealth Government color documentary of the Royal tour. Plus ★ "It Happens Every Thursday," comedy-drama, starring Loretta Young, John Forsythe.

LYRIC.—★★ "Little Boy Lost," post-war drama, starring Bing Crosby, Claude Dauphin. Plus "Give Me a Sailor," musical comedy, starring Bob Hope, Martha Raye. (Both re-releases.)

PALACE.—★ "Three Young Texans," technicolor Western, starring Jeff Hunter, Mitzi Gaynor, Keefe Brasselle. Plus ★ "The Vicious Years," drama, starring Tommy Cook, Gar Moore, Sybil Merrit.

PLAZA.—★ "Hell and High Water," technicolor CinemaScope sea drama, starring Richard Widmark, Bella Darvi. Plus featurettes.

PRINCE EDWARD.—★★★ "Knock on Wood," technicolor comedy, starring Danny Kaye, Mai Zetterling. Plus featurettes.

REGENT.—★★ "Night People," technicolor CinemaScope spy drama, starring Gregory Peck, Broderick Crawford, Rita Gam. Plus featurettes.

SAVOY.—★ "Adorable Creatures," French-language comedy, starring Martine Carol, Danielle Darrieux, Daniel Gelin. Plus ★★ "Grand Concert," Russian color ballet feature.

STATE.—★★ "The Glenn Miller Story," technicolor musical biography, starring James Stewart, June Allyson. Plus featurettes.

ST. JAMES.—★ "Rose Marie," Eastman color CinemaScope musical, starring Howard Keel, Ann Blyth, Fernando Lamas. Plus featurettes.

VICTORY.—★ "Wings of the Hawk," technicolor outdoor adventure, starring Van Heflin, Julia Adams, Abbe Lane. Plus ★ "Forbidden," mystery, starring Tony Curtis, Joanne Dru, Lyle Bettger.

Films not yet reviewed

MAYFAIR.—"The Eddie Cantor Story," technicolor musical drama, starring Keefe Brasselle, Marilyn Erskine. Plus featurettes.

PARK.—"Not Wanted," drama, starring Sally Forrest, Keefe Brasselle. Plus "Strange Mr. Gregory," drama, starring Jean Rogers, Edmund Lowe. (Re-release.)

VARIETY.—"Souls at Sea," drama, starring Gary Cooper, Paulette Goddard, George Raft. (Re-release.) Plus "Speaking of Murder," omnibus thriller, starring Kay Walsh, Hubert Gregg, Howard Marion Crawford.

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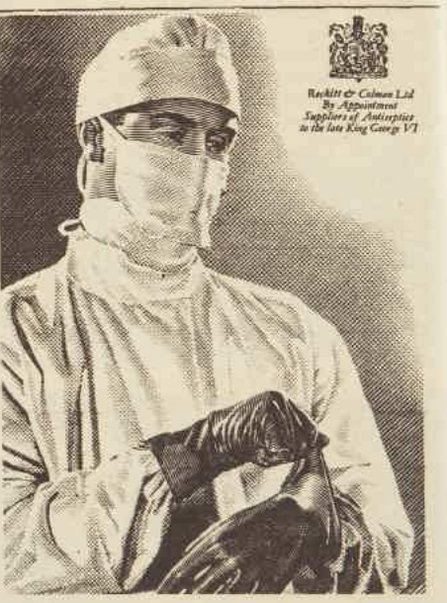

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1. AMERICANS in Rome, Anita (Jean Peters), left, Maria (Maggie McNamara), centre, and Frances (Dorothy Maguire), share a flat and expenses while working as secretaries.

2. INTRODUCED to Prince Dino de Cessi (Louis Jourdan) at a party, Maria is attracted to him, but Anita and Frances warn her to be wary as Dino is a notorious flirt.

MODERN ROMANCE OF ROME

3. INVITATION by Giorgio (Rossano Brazzi) to Anita breaks office rules. Giorgio loses his job through this date.

THE beautiful architecture of ancient Rome forms the background for Fox's technicolor CinemaScope romance "Three Coins in the Fountain."

The film title derives from the superstition that to throw a coin into Rome's Fountain di Trevi means that the thrower will one day return to the city.

Dorothy Maguire, Clifton Webb, Jean Peters, Rossano Brazzi, Maggie McNamara, and Louis Jourdan are the film's six main characters.

4. FURIOUS because she thinks Maria has told about the date. Anita is consoled by Frances, who hopes to have Giorgio reinstated.

5. LEFT. Chaperoned by Frances, Maria visits Venice with Dino. Deciding to get her man, Maria studies him, learns his likes and dislikes, and pretends to share them.

6. ABOVE. Enchanted by Maria, who seems to share his tastes in everything, Dino takes her to meet his mother. He proposes. Maria confesses she has tricked him.

7. LEARNING that her boss, Shadwell (Clifton Webb), to whom she is deeply attached, has only a year to live, Frances elects to marry at once.

8. FOUNTAIN is the meeting place of the three happy couples, their troubles ironed out. Maria and Dino, Frances and Shadwell, Anita and Giorgio, who has succeeded in getting his job back, are to marry in Rome.

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*This proven effective medicine is also available in a special form for infants and young children—Nyal Decongestant BABY Cough Elixir. Acts quickly. Brings soothing relief from constant coughing. Can safely be given to babies from six months. 3 oz. **3/6** 6 oz. **5/6**.*

NYAL

Have WHITER TEETH IN 10 DAYS

Here's a toothpaste that *really* cleans your teeth. Nyal Toothpaste contains a highly-activated cleansing agent designed to safely remove film and food deposits. Actually makes teeth whiter in 10 days. Clean, refreshing taste. American formula. American flavouring. *All chemists.*

Soothing relief from Cold Sores

To get positive, soothing relief—quickly—from cold sores and cracked lips use NYAL Cold Sore Cream or Cold Sore Lotion. The **Cream** keeps the lips soft and supple while it heals the cold sore. The ***Lotion*** dries up the cold sore until it quickly disappears. Either the Cream or the Lotion stops the burning, itching sensation instantly. Cream or Lotion— **2/3**.

NYAL COLD SORE CREAM • LOTION

Breathe freely in 2 minutes

Here's a way to get immediate relief from nasal congestion accompanying "stuffy" head colds, 'flu and catarrh. Use the handy plastic atomiser containing Nyal DECONGESTANT Nasal Drops. Contains an active decongestant in an aqueous solution. No sting. Get relief anytime, anywhere. Clears nasal passages in two minutes — keeps them free for three hours. **5/6**.

NYAL NASAL SPRAY

Stop sore throats

You can be sure of soothing relief from sore throat with NYAL **Iodised** Throat Tablets. These tablets contain pure iodine in a safe, pleasant-tasting form. Slip a NYAL **Iodised** Throat Tablet into the mouth—the iodine it contains will quickly soothe inflamed membranes and helps to check the spread of infection. 40 tablets **2/-** — 60 tablets **2/9**.

NYAL IODISED THROAT TABLETS

ASK FOR THESE OTHER PRODUCTS

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NYAL Emulsified Liquid Paraffin	4/6
NYAL Esterin Tablets	3/6
NYAL Kleenrite Dental Plate Paste	2/7
NYAL Kleenrite Dental Plate Powder	3/7
NYAL Holdtite Dental Plate Powder	3/-, 4/3
NYAL Kidney Pills	3/6, 6/6
NYAL Nutritive Hypophosphites	4/6
NYAL Vitamin & Mineral Tonic	6/-, 11/-
NYAL Vitamin B Caplets with Iron	5/-
NYAL Vitamin B Caplets with Vitamin C	6/9

FOR COUGHS, COLDS & FLU

NYAL Analgesic Balm	2/6
NYAL Aspirin-Codeine Tablets	2/-, 3/6
NYAL Baby Cough Syrup	2/9, 3/9
NYAL Bronchitis Mixture	3/9, 6/3
NYAL Chest Rub	3/-
NYAL Chilblain Paint	2/9
NYAL Children's Cough Mixture	2/9, 3/9
NYAL Cough Mixture	4/3
NYAL Crenphes	3/9, 6/3, 7/6
NYAL Croup Ointment	2/9
NYAL Honey Cough Elixir	3/6
NYAL Honey Cough Syrup	3/9
NYAL Influenza and Cold Tablets	2/9
NYAL Influenza Mixture	3/9
NYAL Kleer-o-Nasl	2/6
NYAL Mustard Ointment	2/6
NYAL Nasal Drops (Aqueous and Regular)	3/-
NYAL Nasal Drops (Decongestant)	4/-
NYAL Quinine 'Flu Mixture	4/9
NYAL Sore Throat Gargle	2/9, 3/9
NYAL White Pine and Tar	3/3
NYAL Whooping Cough Syrup	3/6
NYAL Huskeys	1/9, 2/6

FOR THE MEDICINE CABINET

NYAL Adhesotic Dressing	2/-
NYAL Antacid Powder	3/6
NYAL Carbo Witch Hazel Salve	2/6
NYAL Earache Drops	2/3
NYAL Eye Drops (Decongestant)	4/9
NYAL Eye Lotion (with Plastic Eye Bath)	3/9
NYAL Figsen (Regular)	2/3
NYAL Figsen (Double Strength)	3/3
NYAL Toothache Drops	2/3
NYAL White Liniment	3/6, 5/9
NYAL Zinc Cream (jars or tubes)	2/3

BABY NEEDS

NYAL Milk of Magnesia Regular	2/6, 4/3
NYAL Milk of Magnesia Sweet	2/6, 4/3
NYAL Santonettes (Worm Tablets)	3/6
NYAL Soothing Syrup	2/6
NYAL Teething Powders	2/-
NYAL Vitamised Children's Tonic	5/9
NYAL Worm Syrup (with Santonin)	3/9
NYAL Baby Soap	1/11
NYAL Baby Oil	3/-
NYAL Baby Powder	2/-, 4/1
NYAL Baby Powder Bear	9/6

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Continuing . . . . The Magicians

much and began to show the effects of it.

Even Ravenstreet, who had a good head, felt hot and muzzy by the time the brandy and cigars appeared. Flushed and rather shrill, the women reluctantly quitted the table, with the usual outcries at this enforced segregation.

"You men are not to sit for hours talking business," cried Peggy Garson, making a face at her husband.

For a few minutes they didn't talk business.

"I must tell you," said Treves to Ravenstreet, "that you've made quite a hit with Mavis, who's a very dashing type, as you can see, and not easily pleased. She told me she thought you very distinguished and most attractive."

"Widow, isn't she?" said Garson, who probably knew all about her but had to give Treves his Mavis cue. The idea round here, Ravenstreet reflected gloomily, seemed to be that if he could no longer have the managing-directorship of the New Central Electric, he had better have Mavis, although on what terms was not yet clear.

Married, Treves explained, to an equally dashing, whale-of-a-fellow, R.A.F. type who had killed himself testing a new jet fighter three years ago. Mavis had come out of it very well, tremendous courage and all that, in Treves' opinion, which was now well soaked in sentiment and brandy.

He admitted, though, that Anne, who could be very sharp about her gorgeous cousin at times ("You know what the girls are"), hinted that Mavis knew how to look after herself and was by no means inconsolable.

"It was Anne who thought she might amuse you," he concluded, grinning at Ravenstreet.

"A kind thought. But am I supposed to be in need of amusement?"

That finished Mavis, as he knew it would. At once, woman was out, business was in.

"Frankly, Charles, yes, every time," cried Garson rather wildly, passing the brandy. "Look, old man, don't forget we knew what was coming off this afternoon. I hate to say it—but we told you so. And now let's decide what to do, before Peggy comes to drag us out. What did you say to George Hathon? I know he took you off for a drink."

He told them, to their dismay, which for a moment he found rather touching. His leaving would mean promotion for both of them; but, even so, they did not want him to go. He reminded himself, however, that without him their long-term position would be weaker, for they alone had opposed Selby.

"After old Frank Crewe died, you carried that show," said Garson. "You and nobody else. And we know it, even if the others don't——"

"I'm surprised George Hathon can't see what a hole you'd leave if you went. Silly fat old twerp! If he hadn't ratted this afternoon, Selby would never have swung it like that. What's the matter with Hathon? You're supposed to be friends, aren't you, Charles? Is he gaga?"

"Not a bit," said Ravenstreet carefully. It was rather an effort to go on talking; his weariness was astonishing. "George is still using that old head of his. Of course, he doesn't want me to go, and buying me out will be a great nuisance. But he'd rather I went than Selby did."

"Which means," said Garson with a look at Treves, "that very soon, no matter how we sweat on the job, he'd rather we went than Selby did. If you go, we'll be on our way out shortly."

Ravenstreet didn't like this. He made a gesture with his cigar to stop Treves chiming in,

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and then, after the tiny interval of silence necessary to secure their attention, he was able to reply mildly.

"That doesn't follow, you know. The fact that you always supported me won't worry Selby, now that he's got what he wants. And you're too useful to him, as he knows very well."

He looked at Garson. "You'll be Production Manager." He turned to Treves. "You'll be Sales Manager." He finished his brandy and waved away an offer of more.

"I'm convinced that is what'll happen. But if you'd like me to say something pretty strong to George Hathon, I'll do it. In some ways," he continued rather slowly, "you'll be better off if I'm clean out of the whole thing. While I'm still around, Selby will see you as part of the Ravenstreet faction, so to speak. If I've gone, then he can take you on your own merits, and he's not a fool, he knows he needs you both on the production and sales sides. So stop worrying, boys, and stop giving me any reproachful looks."

"I didn't know we were, Charles," said Garson apologetically. "But it never occurred to me you might clear out altogether. I'll tell you now, I never thought you'd let Selby beat you like that. Neither did young Philip here. Even when we were warning you, we thought you'd pull something out of the bag at the last minute."

"'Watch the old maestro, we told each other," said Treves.

"Now why didn't you, Charles?" Garson persisted. "What happened?"

They were looking at Ravenstreet, who spent a moment or two removing the ash from his cigar as if he were performing an important experiment.

"You were my young men," he began slowly, "and I'm sorry if you feel disappointed. The answer is, I think, that Selby was playing a game that I can't play, not having that sort of mind, and don't want to learn to play. If the Company had been facing a crisis; if something new had to be designed, tried out, put into production, rushed to the Government or hurried on to the market, ten Selbys couldn't have taken it away from me. But things aren't like that any longer. So I suppose I didn't really care: Selby could have what he'd schemed for. He's the type that succeeds now; not the maker; the manipulator. It's his world, and he's welcome to it."

He checked himself. He was talking too much, and perhaps with a nasty mixed flavor of bitterness and self-pity creeping into it; and anyhow it was unfair to these two, who couldn't sell out as he could, to suggest that what they were doing was not worth doing. They had plenty of incentives to keep going with New Central Electric. He had better keep his own lack of them to himself.

Somewhere round about there Peggy Garson came bouncing in and made them go into the drawing-room, where Mavis, who had been designed for just this effect, brightened up like a touched-off firework and was at once, in her own phrase, "madly gay."

While the hubands and wives did some of that merry wrangling which somehow is never as merry as it ought to be, Mavis gave Ravenstreet a chance to be madly gay with her, rosy-golden, opulent, gorgeous, a rich blur rather than a person, as they sat on the corner settee.

This time she mixed in a Guide - to - West - End - Amusements act with her Slave-to-Caliph performance, so that it only needed an occasional word from him to keep her going. This was fortunate, because now he felt rather sleepy as well as bored and weary.

But Mavis, it seemed, was by no means a complete fool. She suddenly stopped her prattle.

"You're not really interested, are you?" She used a different tone, gave him a different look. "You just couldn't care less, could you? Now, please, be truthful."

He made an effort, beginning with a smile. "All right. I've had a longish day and rather too much to drink. And if I've been looking blank, that's why."

"You haven't been looking blank—I don't think you could, you haven't that sort of face, too alive, not puddingy enough. If you want to know, you've been looking miserable." She laughed rather wildly.

"And I've been trying so hard. You mightn't believe it, but I'm terribly conscientious. If I'm asked out specially to do something, like being gay for you, then I do my best. Do you want to go? Of course you do, poor man! Well, you're supposed to be taking me home—I live in Knightsbridge, which isn't too far for you, I gather—so if I say I must go then you can go."

She jumped to her feet and at once began yelling apologies and thanks to the Garsons.

She was rather quiet in the cab, letting him do most of the talking, chiefly about the Garsons and Anne and Philip Treves.

When they arrived outside the block of flats in Knightsbridge she asked him in for a drink, but didn't seem surprised or disappointed when he refused, pleading a fairly early start for the works in the morning. But she kept him a few moments in the entrance hall again suddenly dropping her gorgeous-creature manner.

"I haven't a card, but here's somebody else's with my telephone number scribbled on the back. Do call me when you feel like it, even if you only want to look in for a drink. I'll tell you now. I thought from Anne's description—she hasn't a clue, that girl—you'd be a huge bore, but of course you're not, anything but. Unlike most men one meets, you're much more attractive than you think you are, which at least is a nice change. Now remember, Sir Charles, won't you—about giving me a ring any time you feel like it. 'Bye."

Less sleepy now than he had been during the last hour at the Treves', he half-regretted as he drove away that he had not accepted her invitation to go up for a drink. Behind her glitter

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Preventing bad teeth

THE Burmese have the world's best teeth—because they eat only one meal a day. Doctors suggest that Australians should follow suit, but they don't recommend cutting out those between-meal snacks (mostly sugar and other carbohydrates).

A recent experiment with 81 children at Bowral, N.S.W., seems to prove this point. After a period on a controlled diet, with no between-meal snacks and no sugar, 63 of the youngsters had no dental caries. But a similar group in Sydney on an uncontrolled diet showed only four per cent, with teeth free from decay.

A.M., the popular magazine for the whole family, has an interesting article in its current issue on this important subject of teeth.

Printed by Conpress Printing Limited for the publisher, Consolidated Press Limited, 168-174 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

THE CARBOLIC SMELL HAS GONE!

Lifebuoy now has Brand-New Perfume

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The carbolic smell has gone! In its place is a refreshing, brand-new fragrance your whole family will love. 3 out of 4 people who've tried it have already voted New Lifebuoy's perfume best!

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Contains *PURALIN*, new purifying ingredient *to stop "B.O." hours longer*

It's in the shops now . . . and it's the biggest news in toilet soaps for years! The *new* Lifebuoy with a refreshingly different perfume containing Puralin, a purifying ingredient which stops "B.O." the modern way! Yes, the carbolic smell has gone — yet new, fragrant Lifebuoy with its special ingredient is *all* you need to give you protection for hours longer. Get the big thrifty bath size Lifebuoy today!

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NEW CLINICALLY PROVED MENTHOID CREME

(Containing Epinephrine)

The latest scientific development in pain-relieving treatment.

for **IMMEDIATE RELIEF**

From the agonies of:—RHEUMATISM, LUMBAGO, NEURITIS, FIBROSITIS, SCIATICA, NERVE PAINS, BACKACHE, GOUT, STIFF ACHING MUSCLES and JOINTS, also SPRAINS, TIRED MUSCLES and other SPORTS INJURIES.

Pains fly—when you apply—NEW MENTHOID CREME

Clinical tests prove Epinephrine's amazing power to relieve joint and muscle pains. Menthoid Creme, the NEW improved complex formula, incorporates Epinephrine and other analgesics in a special massage creme that quickly penetrates surface skin and tissue to reach deep down to trouble spots where the medicaments can exercise their soothing, pain-relieving properties.

THE CAUSE OF PAIN

The most frequent cause of the rheumatic group of complaints, backache, sciatica, lumbago, neuritis, stiff aching muscles or painful joints, is the accumulation of toxic poisons deposited in your muscles and joints by an impure bloodstream. These gritty, crystalline deposits of acids contract and distort the muscles, stiffen the joints and cause acute pains in back and limbs. It is then you need the marvellous, soothing, pain-relieving properties of the New Menthoid Creme treatment.

HOW MENTHOID CREME ACTS

Clinical and laboratory tests have established conclusively that Epinephrine has amazing power to alleviate pain and suffering consequent on rheumatic, neuritic and muscular disorders. Gentle massage on the affected parts with the super penetrative Menthoid Creme enables the Epinephrine to reach deep down to relieve your pain immediately, to relax muscular constriction, to loosen stiff joints and to strengthen and tone your tired, fatigued muscles.

TREAT THE CAUSE ALSO

To help treat the *cause* of the pains which the New Menthoid Creme alleviates so well, continue taking DR. MACKENZIE'S MENTHOIDS to cleanse your bloodstream and follow the Menthoid diet chart. You will be amazed at the feeling of well-being, the new vigour and energy you will gain. Life really becomes worth living again with the new combined Menthoid treatment.

Some of the "control" spots at which massage with the amazing New Menthoid Creme brings quick relief from pain are shown above. Menthoid Creme instruction leaflet shows many more, one of which may be applicable to your condition.

Menthoid Creme—compounded by the makers of Dr. Mackenzie's Menthoids, the famous treatment for the blood—is odorless, does not stain and will not harm even sensitive skins.

If you suffer joint or muscle misery, get a tube of NEW Menthoid Creme from your chemist TO-DAY.

MENTHOID CREME

(Containing Epinephrine)

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and bosh was that suggestion of a depth of life which was the chief fascination of woman, especially to a man who had known little of it for years and now found himself cold and empty, homeless in a world growing more and more alien.

Dismissing the thought of Mavis, he considered this world, which had just rejected him, with a semi-blind cold fury, in part perhaps the result of the drink that was even now turning to acid in his stomach.

Frank Crewe, his boss and afterwards his father-in-law, had once praised Charles Ravenstreet for having some fire in his stomach. Well, now Frank was dead and almost forgotten; Maureen was dead but a reproachful ghost, because their marriage ought to have worked and didn't; the smooth accountancy boys had taken over New Central Electric to turn it from a pioneer enterprise into something that ought to be taken over by the chain stores; and here he was, no longer Charlie Ravenstreet to anybody, on his way to a club bedroom with acid in his stomach.

. . . .

During the weeks that followed, when he was quietly tidying himself out of New Central Electric, Ravenstreet lived in a region he had never known before, somewhere on the edge of things.

Familiar scenes, situations, characters presented themselves to his eye and ear: the Midland works, his house in Warwickshire, the Victoria Street office, his club, other men's clubs, board rooms and offices and restaurants and bars here and there; all as he had known them for many years, yet not the same now, thinned and flattened out and bleached, no longer solidly real: film scenes, radio features from the life of a middle-aged industrialist.

He was surrounded, he saw, by an immense cast of comic characters, not intentionally absurd but becoming so because without knowing it they were fixed in routines. He couldn't be angry at Selby and George Hathon, even when he caught them trying to cheat him over the purchase of his stock, because they were so idiotically busy being Selby and George Hathon.

Garson and young Philip Treves, who were duly promoted, ought to have annoyed him because, in spite of their earlier protestations, they very soon showed him that he was of diminishing account; but he felt no annoyance because he saw quite clearly that they weren't free agents, as they imagined themselves to be, and as he would have to imagine too if he was to blame them, but were merely reacting automatically, going through their parts as Garson and young Philip Treves.

A wife, a son or daughter, a close friend might have broken this spell; but no such relationship existed for him. He had friends, of course, but in this harsh dry light their friendship dwindled into mere routine goodfellowship, an exchange of jokes, food and drink, paltry confidences.

As his work slackened off, he tried, as he had never had to try before, to amuse himself, spending more and more time in London. The final price agreed for his stock came to well over two hundred thousand pounds, free of tax, so that he felt rich for the first time in his life.

A man needs some leisure to feel rich, and now he had it. He could afford to indulge his tastes, but discovered he had no tastes. The sporting life, which takes most money and time from men of his sort in England, didn't attract him. Golf and some occasional rough shooting were all he wanted in that direction.

During the long evenings in the country, all the longer because he was leaving the works much earlier, he unwrapped and sampled the books he had ordered lavishly in town, but, apart from a few autobiographies and records of adventure, they failed to please him. These new writers either did something rather badly that older writers had done well or they tried to do something that didn't seem to him worth doing, were trivial, small-minded, cliquish.

Finally, after much hesitation, he called up Mavis Westfret, who invited him at once to a cocktail party, which she was giving jointly with a friend at the friend's house in Kensington. She gave him no chance to refuse or to suggest some alternative meeting, so he went along, though he disliked cocktail parties.

The house in Kensington was filled almost to bursting point with people he didn't know and didn't particularly want to know: gay, gorgeous girls with plenty of men round them; angry girls who couldn't find their escorts; middle-aged women prowling hungrily from room to room in search of possible celebrities; young men who were trying to look like their Edwardian grandfathers but lacked the Edwardian confidence; and chaps with long chins and bristling moustaches who still gave the impression that they had just knocked off from the Battle of Britain or El Alamein.

The place was horribly overcrowded and hot; if they had been prisoners of war instead of prisoners of pleasure, there would have been protests to the Swiss Red Cross.

WHEN at last Ravenstreet found Mavis, she pushed him through the mob, up a short flight of stairs, into some sort of cubby-hole that had in it a telephone, two pairs of skis, rubber waders and waterproofs, and a rickety chair. She told him to hold the fort while she brought some whisky. She was prettily dressed but looked too hot, damp, shiny.

"Here we are now," she cried, returning with the whisky. "And don't look so miz. Are you hating it? You are, aren't you?"

"Well, I don't like cocktail parties. They happen too early in the evening. The time's wrong, the drink's wrong, the food's wrong. It's my belief, too, that members of the cocktail-party classes ought to be working at this time of day. We ought to slack off during the afternoon, as most of the human race does, and then start work again and go on until dinner-time. After that, parties should begin. No, the cocktail party is an infernal institution, and nothing's gone right with the world since it imposed itself on us."

He smiled at her. "Thank you for rescuing me—and for this drink."

"When are you coming to see me? Or to take me out if you'd rather? Look—somebody's given me tickets for the second night of a play that's opening next week. Come with me, then we can have supper afterwards. Right? Wonderful!" She told him the night, the time, and the theatre; and they agreed not to put on evening clothes.

"Would you like to run away? Of course you would, this very minute. And I ought to be bashing about or Dot'll be screaming for me. I organise these parties for her — she's filthy rich. Did you meet her? You'd loathe her—no brains at all and never stops talking at the top of her voice. How do I look? No fishing, plain truth."

He gave her the plain truth.

"Oh, well—Dot or no Dot, I must do my face. Thursday, then? Marvellous!"

. . . .

Several days later he lunched with Sir Edwin Karney at George Hathon's club, where they had first met. At the time it seemed merely one of a dozen such engagements, hospitality given without friendship, and it was only afterwards that he realised its importance.

Karney was a good host, anxious to please but not too anxious, and talked easily and well in that unexpectedly deep and soothing voice. Nevertheless, he didn't make Ravenstreet feel at ease. Those high square shoulders, the long face that always seemed several inches too low down, the eyes in oil—no, Ravenstreet couldn't take to the chap. And he was wondering what was behind this lunch.

There must be something, as Hathon had suggested there might be. After a few references to the New Central Electric, there was some probing, done with surgical neatness, into Ravenstreet's state of mind, financial position, plans if any. But even by the time they had gone into the smoke room for coffee, Karney had not come out with anything.

They were swooped on there by a large rosy fellow who was introduced as Major Prisk. He wore country clothes, which looked startling in that club, had a vaguely hearty alcoholic manner and shrewd little eyes, like a calculating pig.

"Not staying, Chummie," he told Karney, with a wide, wet smile under his curly moustache. "Just handin' out today's tip—straight from the jockey's cousin. Saw His Nibs this morning, as per usual, and His Nibs is fussing—yes, almost creating, His Nibs is. Not so much as most blokes would notice, but, of course, I read the signs—bit of smoke comin' out of the cars an' all that. Thought I'd give you the tip. We all like to be put in the picture, I always say. Cheerio-pip!"

But he gave Ravenstreet a sharp look "Nice to have met you, sir." And he ambled away, waving a hand to various acquaintances who looked up and smiled.

"Pippy Prisk," Karney murmured, as they watched him go. "What do you make of him now? I'd be interested to know, Ravenstreet."

"A clever devil pretending to be a silly-ass character."

"Right! You're no fool."

"As a matter of fact," said Ravenstreet, "I'm beginning to think I am. But who is he?"

"He's Mervil's confidential man. Sort of A.D.C. You don't know Mervil, do you? I think he said you hadn't met."

Ravenstreet admitted that although he had heard and read a great deal about Lord Mervil he hadn't had the pleasure of meeting him.

"We're in one or two things together," said Karney, with a touch of complacency. "And now there's something new on. That's what Prisk meant when he said Mervil was fussing. Of course, he doesn't fuss, but Prisk was giving me a hint. That's his style. Now there might be something for you in this thing if you're interested. No, I'm not at liberty to explain. Mervil will want to do that. But what I'm wondering is whether you'd like to get together with me and Mervil one night soon, just to talk it over."

He went on easily, "You're more or less at a loose end, aren't you? Mervil's always heavily booked up, but I imagine we might be able to make it dinner towards the end

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Penny concert, backyard style..

The backyard musicale makes up in enthusiasm for what it lacks in talent and experience. It's good to see kids make their own fun and show their individualism. But they'll learn in their travels through this world that the day of the one-man-band is gone. That there are many things no man can do with his own two hands. That we are all dependent on our neighbours, our friends, our work mates.

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Winter bargains
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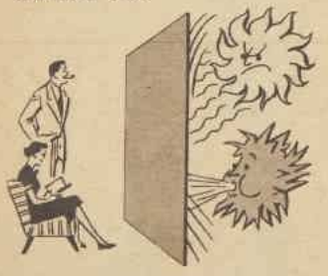
If you've got any sort of verandah or broken-down room going to waste, you can quickly change it to something as smart as the room pictured above, with Cane-ite—the only building board that INSULATES AS IT DECORATES, at moderate cost.



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Cane-ite comes in easy-to-handle sheets to fit all wall spaces with next-to-no carpentry . . . 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 feet lengths by 3 and 4 feet widths. You can get up to 48 square feet coverage with a single sheet. White-ant proofed. Paint in any finish.

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(1) Natural suede-like finish. (2) Primed Cane-ite. (3) Ivory Cane-ite, beautiful pre-finished smooth surface which needs no further decoration. Particularly suitable for ceilings because of its excellent light reflection qualities.

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Insulates as it decorates

Sold by timber merchants and hardware stores

Made by THE COLONIAL SUGAR REFINING CO. LTD., Building Materials Division
Sydney, Newcastle, Wagga, Melbourne, Brisbane, Townsville, Adelaide, Perth

Continuing . . . . The Magicians

from page 40

of next week or the beginning of the week after. All right to you?"

Ravenstreet said it was. "Unless," he added, "you're thinking of entering the field against New Central——"

"No, no, something quite different. Not connected with the electrical industry at all. You might say, and probably will," Karney went on, "that it isn't your kind of thing at all. It's as far away as that."

"Then it's probably too far, and I'm not your man."

Karney shook his head.

"Mervil takes the view, and I agree with him, that although a man may have specialised, if he's big enough he belongs by right to the elite. He's very different from the smaller type of specialist, who can't really give orders but only take 'em, like a technician or a clerk. Mervil's hot on this distinction. But then he very much believes in a compact elite, working together behind the scenes, so to speak——"

"What scenes?" demanded Ravenstreet bluntly. He was rather suspicious of this kind of talk.

Karney waved a hand. "A few people put on the show—and the rest lap it up. Either you're out in front, having it done for you, or you're at the back knowing how it's done. That's all very much down Mervil's street, of course. He says there'll be more and more of it, that the gap'll soon be wider and wider."

"This all sounds a bit fancy to me, Karney," said Ravenstreet rather stiffly. "But, of course, I'll be glad to meet Lord Mervil and hear what he has to say. It's a business proposition, I take it—and not politics—or a new religion?"

"Oh—very much a business proposition," Karney replied; and then added: "Among other things. Well, one of Mervil's people will be letting you know when and where we dine. Probably Major Prisk, if he's still in town."

Actually it was Prisk who rang him up, in a "jolly-good-egg" style, two days later, inviting him to dine at Lord Mervil's house on Friday week, which would be the night after his evening at the theatre with Mavis. Well, there was a page of his book nicely filled, with what seemed adequate arrangements for delaying the darkness.

. . . . . .

Mavis and he did not agree about the play they saw; their respective attitudes towards the theatre were quite different. Ravenstreet disliked going to West End playhouses; their hours were wrong; they were mostly uncomfortable; they seemed to have too many half-witted patrons; and nine out of ten of the plays they offered didn't seem worth the time, trouble, or money spent on them, so many trashy novelettes printed on hand-made paper and bound in calf-skin.

He soon discovered that Mavis' view was not like this at all. She expected nothing of any importance, so she enjoyed everything, the whole business, arriving and finding the seats and looking at the programme and looking at the audience and looking at the lights going down and the lights going up, and the curtain rising, and seeing the set and the actors and the actresses and noticing what they wore and whether they were looking older or younger and remembering tasty bits of their private lives that could be discussed later.

Actually, to Mavis a play was some fascinating types doing charades. So this play they saw, which to Ravenstreet was idiotic, was to her as good as any other; she chattered about it happily at supper, in a restaurant filled with fascinating types who had been doing charades and behaved as if taking supper were part of a charade, too.

They ate well and drank a good deal. Mavis was excited by the noise and luxury and late-night bonhomie, and by the presence of the stage and screen stars, the famous faces that smiled through the smoke.

This female excitement was infectious; Ravenstreet also began to yield to the atmosphere of the place and the hour. So when Mavis, beaming with gratitude, asked him in for a drink, he followed her into the small flat, which seemed to him charming and rather pathetic, all deliciously feminine. He was not drunk; he spoke sensibly and moved steadily; but his inhibitions had been dissolved away.

A self that usually lurked in the background, making suggestions that other and more widely experienced selves rejected with contempt, now took charge of him, and of Mavis, too, for this was a fellow who understood her perfectly, it seemed. And so finally he took possession of her like an Oriental conqueror.

But there was a cold man there, too, a melancholy man, standing aloof from the archaic yet ever brand-new witcheries of time; and this man, much closer to the essential Charles Ravenstreet than the other fellow, refused to feel anything but a cool wonder, a faint disgust.

It was he who, when they returned to the sitting-room for a final drink and a cigarette, pointed out that sex without love must be either mindless and brutal or, as this was now, fatuous. Here was the hour of tenderness; and there could be none between them, without the most shocking pretence.

She regarded him, as if through some diminishing glass, with ironical appraisement.

When he was about to break the heavy, sticky silence that had fallen between them, she stopped him. "Don't say it."

"You don't know what I was going to say." He sounded, he thought, as big an ass as he felt.

"Perhaps not," she said wearily. "But you looked as if you were about to come all moral and fatherly, and tell me I'm much too nice a girl to do this sort of thing. If so, don't say it."

"All right, I won't."

He picked up his drink, then put it down quickly, because he saw that she was crying. He half rose.

"My dear girl!" he began, in dismay.

But she waved him down again, and then flung herself in front of him, leaning against his knees and so keeping her head turned away from him. After some hesitation and a little sympathetic prompting, it all came out, drawn out of her by the ghost of that tenderness which should have been there between them at that hour, revealing the love they had only mimicked and mocked.

She had never loved her husband, who had gone, perhaps almost by appointment, to his death knowing half her secret. What he didn't know was that the other man she loved then, still loved, would always love, was one of his Service superiors, older and heavily married and committed, a man now in a distant command who was busy forgetting she existed.

"The Magic Man," she said mournfully. "Girls like me, jolly good sorts when we're not washing out stockings and wondering about the rent, nearly always get tangled early with one of these fatal devils—magic

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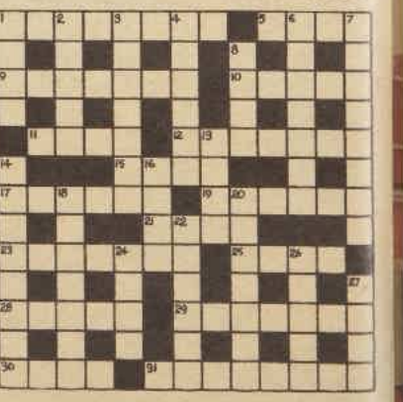
THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. To be found in the Royal train (8).
5. Close upturned vessels (4).
9. A famous Gardner with eastern staple food produces a deadly sin (7).
10. It is not one's own (5).
11. Adorn part of a pack of cards (4).
12. Watered silk containing a bin (7).
15. Ultimate model for shaping shoes (4).
17. Learned person in midst of pictures (6).
19. No robe for the fairy king (6).
21. An Italian river and one in any apple (4).
23. Collection of purulent matter (7).
25. "And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of . . . ?" (Hamlet, Shakespeare) (4).
28. Fragrance of a Queensland town (5).
29. Little bit more than a company of revellers in regular course of procedure (7).
30. Small whirlpool (4).
31. Experts in physical jerks hiding a broken man (8).

Solution will be published next week.

D A I C S P
WARDEN EASTERN
L V N R O E
REVERSED OSSA
N I P T
MUST MONASTIC
N A A G
DIAGONAL MEET
C A S A
BOSS ILLUMINE
R P O E M I
INTERN FLAUNT
S R S T L E

Solution to last week's crossword

DOWN

1. Contrivance for grappling and holding cannot be lawless (4).
2. Habitual practice exercised by you and a wise man (8).
3. Gleam observed by children on heavenly bodies but not the big ones (7).
4. Chooses by vote (6).
6. More flimsy but there is a place in it for a drink (7).
7. Cut up an evergreen tree before a tent for a repentant sinner (8).
8. Mary could have used what she had as a balm (4).
13. A small thing which is mighty (4).
14. No, it does not speak about the age of the parish priest, it only tells where he lives (8).
16. Snakes as an afterthought (4).
18. Run away mainly from a sailor's study (7).
20. Wandering Arab carries on his head the thing to sleep on (7).
22. Sea eagle's head hides no bookie (6).
24. Cheese made in Holland (4).
26. Draws out and twists into thread and going back cuts with scissors (5).
27. Notices from both sides (4).

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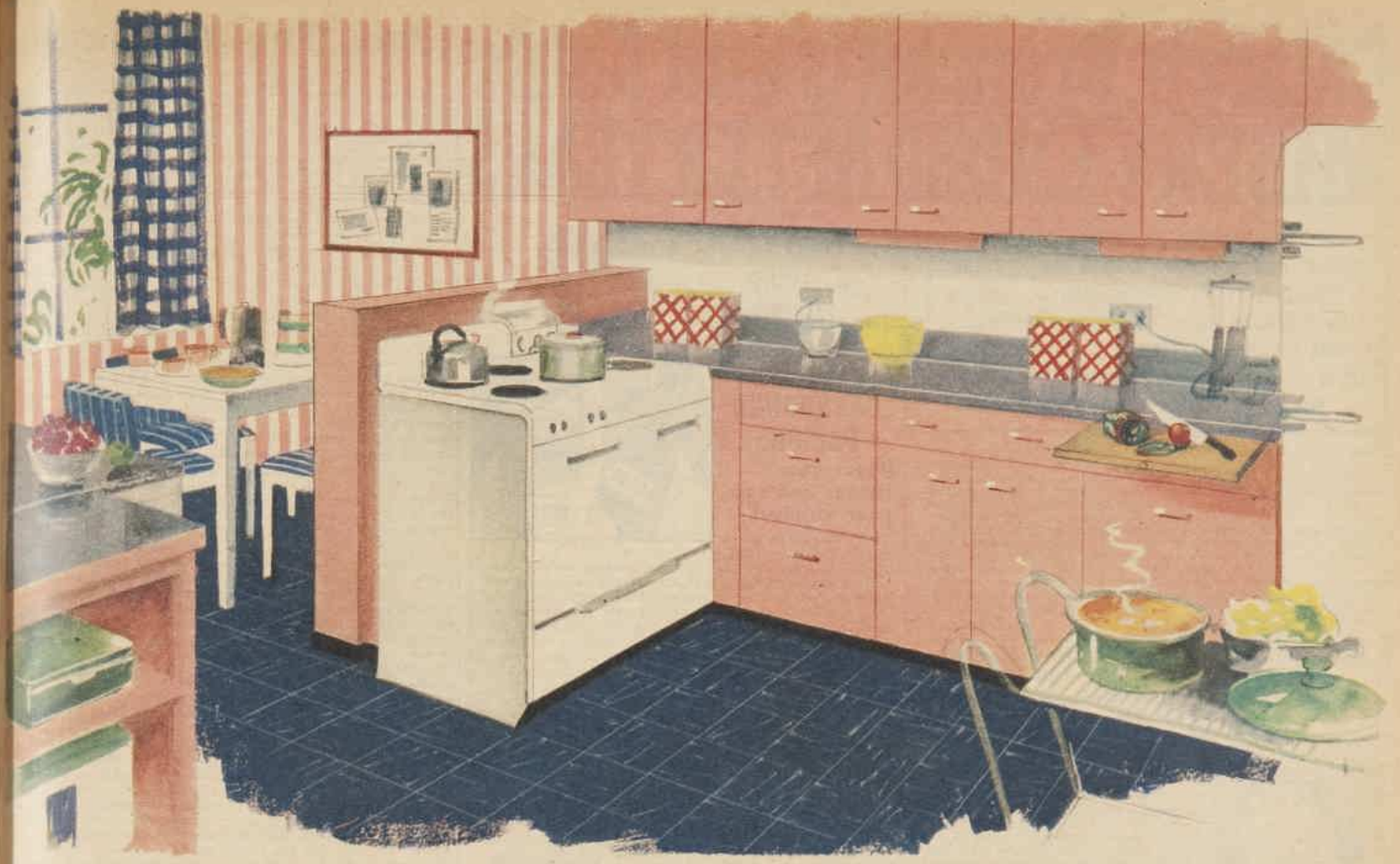

LATTICED CANISTERS in cherry-red combine most successfully with the pink used as the basic color in this attractive kitchen. Dark blue is the complementary shade. The striped wallpaper unites kitchen to breakfast-room, which repeats the color scheme.

COLOR SCHEMING

By JOAN MARTIN

Pink, always a flattering shade and a universal favorite with women, is the basic color chosen this week for the second article in our series of six on home color schemes.

THIS WEEK: PINK

PINK is a color with a very large range—from palest of baby-pink to deep red — and provided you keep to the same toning it is possible to use all shades in one room.

One of the loveliest color schemes I have ever seen was in a living-room furnished entirely in shades of pink and red with accents of mauve and purple, and, exciting as it was, the room still had an air of restfulness and harmony.

But if you are thinking of doing the same thing, do be sure the tonings are right. For instance, if you start with a pink that has blue in it, be careful to see that all other shades have, too.

Should you choose a pink that has yellow in it, be sure that all complementary shades are based on yellow.

I have chosen a kitchen as our first example of a color scheme based on pink, because some people still believe this color should be confined to the bedroom or nursery, and a kitchen should be, if not antiseptically white, at least decorated in the more conventional greens, yellows, or blues.

The kitchen illustrated shows just how attractive it can look.

Where the kitchen extends to the breakfast-room a striped paper in the same shade of pink has been used, so although there is a definite break between the two rooms there is also a feeling of unity.

In the second illustration, showing a section of a somewhat traditional living-room, a deep pink (almost red) has been used. This is a truly exciting color, and it is not for the timid. But it is a wonderful shade used boldly.

In this example a rather unusual color combination has been used to illustrate its possibilities. The carpet is charcoal-grey, a color strong enough to "tie" the wall to the floor, while the upholstery is in paler grey.

The third illustration shows pink used with the very popular modern unit furniture.

MODERN ROOM with its dusty-pink walls and carpet shows how this color can be used effectively as a background for unit furniture. One wall is off-white to set off the pictures.

UNUSUAL COLOR COMBINATION used in a living-room furnished in the traditional manner shows the possibilities of pink as a basic shade. Deep pink walls are combined with a charcoal-grey carpet and pale grey upholstery. A yellow chair gives contrast.

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Catarrh, Bronchitis and Colds
MISERY ENDED AFTER YEARS

LANTIGEN 'B' USERS SAY

"FREE FROM COLDS AND CATARRH FOR 12 YEARS" . . . "ALL MISERY OF CATARRH GONE" . . . "SEVEN YEARS' FREEDOM FROM COLDS AND CATARRH" . . . "SINUS INFECTION CLEARED" . . . "BRONCHITIS RELIEF AT LAST" . . . "BABY'S BRONCHITIS BEATEN" . . . "NO SINUS TROUBLE FOR OVER FOUR YEARS."

These are just a few extracts from the personally written letters that have poured in from all over the world from grateful users of Lantigen 'B' Oral Vaccine. They have already proved the effectiveness of the wonderful, simple Lantigen 'B' treatment. Lantigen 'B' is taken orally (by mouth) in a few drops of water at night or in the morning as directed—just like ordinary medicine. Successful even in most stubborn cases, it incites the system to create the antibodies (antidotes) which combat the poisons released by the germs, causing Catarrhal and Bronchial disorders. By doing this, it not only brings relief, but helps the system to build up natural resistance and immunity against these germs. You can enjoy this twofold benefit if you treat your Catarrhal or Bronchial condition with Lantigen 'B.' You can obtain Lantigen 'B' Oral Vaccine at all chemists. See your chemist today and ask him for a descriptive Lantigen leaflet.

UNSOLICITED LETTERS OF TESTIMONY FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD PROVE VALUE OF LANTIGEN
(Originals of all testimonials may be inspected on our files)

DROP after DROP after DROP... like water from a dripping tap!
CATARRHAL POISONS infect your tissues and sap your vitality!

Catarrhal poisons infect your entire system, causing blocked-up nasal passages, racking coughs, congestion in nose, throat and chest, catarrhal indigestion and dyspepsia and splitting headaches. Lantigen 'B,' taken just like ordinary medicine, stimulates the natural healing power of the system to produce what are called antibodies. These antibodies are the natural antidotes to germ infection. They neutralise the germ poisons, reduce inflammation and thus clear up congestion, end aching catarrhal headaches, clear stuffy nasal passages and thereby restore general good health and sound sleep.

ASK YOUR CHEMIST FOR LANTIGEN 'B'

NO BRONCHITIS FOR 12 MONTHS

"I am a sufferer of Bronchitis. My arms were like pin cushions caused by injections. I took Lantigen 'B'; when on the third bottle I found relief. I have had no Bronchitis for over twelve months. The trouble is, people take one bottle, perhaps two, think it's not acting. With me it took three bottles before I felt a marked difference. After four bottles I was a different person."
—*Mrs. K.P., Perth, W.A.*

FREE NOW FROM COLDS & CATARRH

"From childhood I was a constant sufferer of chest troubles, commonly called colds . . . my doctor advised me to take a course of Lantigen 'B' before commencement of winter, which I have carried out, and can honestly say I have never had the sign of a cold for twelve years."
—*Mr. E.R., Sydney, N.S.W.*

"FEARED COMING OF NIGHT"

"Seven years ago I lay in hospital trying to get control of my Bronchitis and Catarrh. I returned home to live a life of misery. I feared the coming of night. All night long I coughed and coughed. I bought Lantigen 'B.' In three weeks I was up again . . . have improved ever since. I have no signs of Catarrh or Bronchitis and never a headache."
—Mrs. J.V.P., Leichhardt, N.S.W.

"FEELS NEW WOMAN"

"I have suffered from Bronchitis for over 12 years every winter and cough all year round. Tried everything. I am on the second bottle (of Lantigen 'B') and honestly I feel a new woman. It works out most economically."
—Mrs. E.G., Wittenhall, Eng.

"SINUS TROUBLE"

"I suffered from Sinus trouble for years and contracted colds or 'flu with the slightest change in the weather . . . I tried a bottle of Lantigen 'B.' That was four years ago and now I would not even fear a bubonic plague."
—*Mr. H.J.L., Bankstown, N.S.W.*

"CATARRHAL HEADACHES GONE"

"Lantigen 'B' is a marvellous treatment for Catarrh. I feel quite a new man. Have lost all dull headaches and dull feelings and take quite an interest in life again."
—*Mr. E.McA., Glenlee, N.Z.*

"COLDS CURBED"

"My elder son was never without a cold. Since taking Lantigen 'B' he has not had one cold."
—Mrs. M.C., Abbotsford, N.S.W.

(Originals of all testimonials may be inspected at our offices.)

SCIENTIFIC APPROVAL!

In the introduction to an important review of the available literature about oral vaccines, Dr. David Thompson, O.B.E., M.B., Ch.B., D.P.H., Director of the Pickett-Thomson Research Laboratory in London, and his co-workers say that, after having reviewed all the available literature about the use of oral vaccines, they are convinced that immunity can be obtained with vaccines administered by the oral route. Dr. Cronin Lowe reports in the British Medical Journal as follows: "In my experience, the oral antigens (oral vaccines) have been mostly employed in cases of catarrhal infections, rheumatic conditions and catarrhal enterocolitis. Clinical response has been quite definitely marked."

Dramatic and Long-Lasting Relief from Germ-caused
RHEUMATISM
Sciatica, Lumbago, Fibrositis, Neuritis with LANTIGEN 'C'

SORE, STIFF MUSCLES AND ACHING JOINTS FREED FROM PAIN AND DISCOMFORT AFTER YEARS OF SUFFERING . . . NO DRUGS, CANNOT HARM THE HEART.

WONDERFUL 2-WAY VACCINE ACTION, NO RUBBING, NO MASSAGE, SAFE — SIMPLE — NATURAL. JUST A FEW DROPS IN WATER AS DIRECTED. WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH OTHER TREATMENTS.

ASK YOUR CHEMIST FOR LANTIGEN 'C' TODAY

ASTHMA—HAY FEVER
Relief—Immunity Promoted with Lantigen 'E'

Only those who suffer Asthma and Hay Fever know how exhausting these recurring attacks really are. Lantigen 'E' Oral Vaccine gives wonderful double relief because it contains . . .

(1) Extracts of mixed grass pollens and house dusts. These extracts neutralise the effect of the actual dust and pollens.
(2) An oral vaccine which deals with Catarrhal and Bronchial germs.
The combined effect is to relieve the symptoms and to assist the system to build up its natural resistance against future attacks.

Take the First Step to Ease and Comfort
Ask your Chemist for the suitable
Lantigen
ORAL VACCINE

FREE BOOKLET *Write today. Get all the facts about all Lantigen treatments.* Edinburgh Laboratories, 103 York St., Sydney

OVER 4,000,000 BOTTLES OF LANTIGEN SOLD ALL OVER THE WORLD!

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Continuing The Magicians

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men. Two nice dull men have wanted to marry me, in a nice dull way, and I've just been decent enough to tell them it wouldn't work. By the time I've come round to thinking it would, the offers won't be there. Of course, if I were a clever, cool girl like Anne, it would be very different. But I'm not. As you observe.

"Believe it or not, I've often thought of suicide. No, don't start telling me I'm a fool—I know I am up to a point.

"But it's all such a frightful waste, that's what I can't bear. Everything's slipping away, running out on one, going down the sink like dirty water. Ten years ago there was a whole wide world in front of me. Now it's been cut down to getting by in Knightsbridge. In another ten I'll be wondering how to make my face look like one. And in another ten, if I live that long, I'll be wondering if I can raise two cooked meals a day.

"What's it all for? Why don't they tell us the truth while we're young and able to stand it? Why aren't we brought up to be tough? What's the use of all our fancy feelings if we're all just hurrying to the undertaker? This love business we get tangled in—what's the point of it, why do we bother with it? Comfort me, for pity's sake! I did my best for you—though I know it didn't mean anything—no, shut up, don't let's pretend."

She turned sharply to look up into his face, grinning derisively.

"I know I look terrible, and you see I'm not bothering. No tactics. No tact. Am I a complete fool? Am I a coward? What's the matter with me? What's the matter with nearly everybody? Tell me something to comfort me. Go on, go on, just talk—don't leave me yet—I can't bear it."

So he talked, a weary man at the end of a long, empty day, and he was sensible and kind and quite futile. There was nothing she wanted to hear that he could tell her.

As he forced himself to offer her meaningless consolation and good advice that was not worth the stale air that carried it to her ear, he found himself at the end of this rollicking evening still crawling on the edge of things. Nor did he deceive her.

"That'll do." She jumped to her feet. "Have another drink? No? You want to go, don't you? All right. But I'll tell you something. You may have plenty of money and be a great man among these electrical engineering boys. But, apart from that, you haven't a clue, have you? And if you ask me, you're about where I am—in a different, dry, man's way—aren't you?"

"To be honest—yes," he admitted, preparing to go. "In fact, it's probably worse for me—inside. I've arrived after a long journey—and there isn't anything. As you say, not a clue. Of course, it may be temporary—a busy man who's begin ginning to stop being busy—but I doubt it. Lots of people die long before they're buried. Perhaps I'm one of them."

"You can't be," she retorted, with an unexpected touch of shrewdness. "If you were, you wouldn't know it. I meet plenty of them. You're not one. Perhaps you'll get religion or something. Let me know if you do—I'll try it."

He shook his head smilingly. "But there's something else. You might want a bit of help, somebody to stake you in a small way — to start some modest enterprise, to go somewhere to make a start. If there's nobody else you can ask, then ask me. Promise. Good!"

She looked tearful again as she nodded agreement.

So much for nights out with gorgeous gay blondes when make a man forget how time is draining him away!

NEXT night, Ravenstreet dined with Lord Mervil. Karney was there, the deformed lieutenant of this captain of finance; and so was Major Prisk, mixing drinks, waiting for orders, doing his silly-ass act. All on a top floor in Park Lane, where a very large sitting-room and a small dining-room, both with plate-glass windows, overlooked the park.

At a first glance, set against such massive oddities as Karney and Prisk, Lord Mervil seemed small and ordinary, almost colorless: a man in his sixties, grey and trim, with something of the manner and voice, clipped and high-pitched, of the routine British general. Ravenstreet was surprised; he had expected somebody more impressive; after all, Mervil, whether a public benefactor or a public nuisance, was supposed to be a tremendous fellow.

But these first impressions soon had to be revised. Mervil had something that reduced Karney to an eccentric-looking subordinate and Prisk to a servile clown. It was not mere self-confidence, the result of years of success and power; it was a quality of will residing in that compact figure, that neat grey head, behind those Arctic eyes. It could be discovered in the questions he shot at Ravenstreet.

After the first quarter of an hour, Ravenstreet felt that Mervil knew everything about him that Mervil thought worth knowing; and he guessed that

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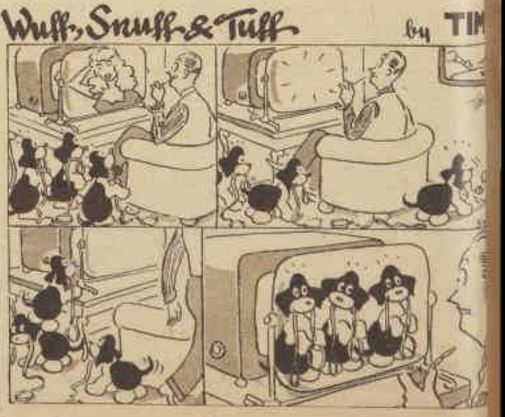
FOR THE CHILDREN



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both Karney and Prisk had already reported on him but that Mervil had decided to ask his own questions before taking him into his confidence. It was brilliantly and ruthlessly done, like an examination by the super-head of a World State's secret police.

The food and the wines were excellent, but Mervil himself ate little and appeared to be drinking barley water. No servants waited on them. The dishes arrived in a service lift, and Prisk, who was surprisingly quick and deft for a man of his bulk, carried them to the table and opened and poured out the wine.

"It's the only way," Mervil explained, "if you really want to talk privately. People will imagine that servants and waiters haven't ears, even people who ought to know better. The leakage everywhere is shocking. It's bad in this country, and in America it's worse."

"Are you telling us, Big Boy?" cried Prisk, trying the American end of his character act. Mervil smiled frostily. Evidently Prisk in these surroundings was the licenced court fool.

"I take it, you're bored these days, Ravenstreet," Mervil continued. "You've come to the end of something without having started anything else. A mistake, by the way. I always make sure things overlap. If you've had enough to eat, we'll move into the other room. Get the coffee, Prisk—and cigars and brandy if anybody wants them."

"I do," cried Prisk, bounding ahead of them.

"By the way, Ravenstreet," said Mervil as they moved out, "don't imagine that Prisk's an idiot, though he tries to talk like one."

"It never occurred to me he was. I saw at once he was giving a performance. Rather too obvious, I thought, in fact."

"You can't be too obvious for most people. And fools relax when they think they're with a bigger fool. So it's useful, besides amusing him. Not that Prisk isn't a fool. He is. He has intelligence, but he's a sensualist — too much food, too much drink, too many women. He's admirable as a personal assistant, carrying out definite orders, but that's all. Let's sit here."

Prisk, humming cheerfully, arrived with a trolley on which were cigars and cigarettes, liqueurs and glasses, a vacuum jug of coffee. "Help yourselves. I'll just have a little black coffee."

A few minutes later, Prisk at a word from Mervil produced what seemed to be a small pillbox, which he placed carefully before his chief. Karney, who had been talking, now kept silent as Mervil opened the box and took from it a small white tablet.

"I'd like your word that you'll treat this matter as being absolutely confidential before we go any further, Ravenstreet." And Mervil stared hard at him, making him feel that if he did give his word and then broke it something unpleasant might happen to him.

"It's a promise," said Ravenstreet. "And I'm generally regarded as a fairly close-mouthed type."

"I know that," said Mervil. "Otherwise you wouldn't be here. I couldn't afford to risk anything at this stage with a blabber. Now, you see this tablet. It's a new drug. You're not a chemist, but probably you know some chemistry. However, we'll leave the chemical part of it now. I want you to take this tablet—just crush it and swallow it with water — like any other tablet. I want you to take it sometime when you're not feeling easy, haven't had any drinks but are telling yourself you need a few."

"What's it supposed to do to you?"

"Well—it's not just another sedative. It's not a painkiller, either. It's something quite new and special. What it does is to stop worry, anxiety, feelings of guilt or inadequacy. It makes you feel comfortable, easy. It acts as a buffer between the brain and reality in its less pleasant aspects."

"So do morphia, cocaine, and heroin, I imagine," said Ravenstreet. "But they insist upon too high a price for their charms."

"Apparently this stuff doesn't. The man who discovered it makes three claims for it, all of which I'm having carefully investigated. He claims that it will do people no harm, that an habitual user may need slightly increased doses, but that is all, and that it can be cheaply manufactured if done on a very large scale. If these claims are proved to be correct, then we have in our hands something really big. We can sell millions of boxes a day."

"Has it a name yet?" asked Ravenstreet.

"Sepman Eighteen. Sepman is the chemist who discovered it, after some years of experiment, he says, and this is the eighteenth formula. But, of course, if we decide to put it on the market, we'll find a good name for it, something easy to remember."

"Well, I'll try the stuff," said Ravenstreet. "But I don't see where I come in. You two can handle the finance and publicity, nobody better, and all you want, I imagine, is a manufacturing chemist and a sales organiser, and I'm neither one nor the other."

"Quite," said Karney, and then looked at Mervil as if asking for permission to continue.

"We'll be frank about this, Ravenstreet. If there'd been a first-class manufacturing chemist situated as you are, he'd be here and you wouldn't. But there isn't. And we can't hand this over to one of the big chemical combines, because after we'd done all the preliminary work and given it all the publicity it requires, we might find ourselves out in the cold. Lord Mervil——"

"I'll take over, Karney," Mervil cut in, his clipped high-pitched voice slicing through Karney's smooth bass. "I never feel embarrassed talking about myself. I like to handle things my own way, Ravenstreet, particularly enterprises of this sort, which are something more than mere commercial enterprises. This could be a very big thing indeed. We don't need your capital, but you can come in with us and then make yourself responsible for the manufacturing end, with the help of technical staff, of course. If you think you can't do it, just because up to now you've only been in electrical engineering, then you're certainly not the man I want.

"I have strong views on this subject. As Karney may have told you, I don't believe in specialists on a really high level. A man who insists on specialising must take orders, not give them. He's merely a superior technician. I believe in an elite, a small group who understand one another, who shape things." He stopped and stared at Ravenstreet as if to take fresh stock of him.

"I've succeeded, Ravenstreet," Mervil continued, coldly and without complacency, "largely because I've been able to see a little further ahead than most men. I know what's really happening.

"My investments and enterprises are guided by that knowledge. The newspapers and periodicals I control reflect it. Now we're rapidly arriving at a time when a few men, who know their own minds, can dominate and use millions of people who have to have their minds made up for them. It's as simple as that.

"People in the mass are not only losing their independence but are losing any desire to be independent and active-minded, sharply differentiated individuals. They prefer a mass existence, mass standards, with which they feel more comfortable in their circles. You agree?"

"I agree," said Ravenstreet rather curtly. "But I don't know that I like it."

Karney laughed, not pleasantly. Prisk did a noisy clucking and reproachful head-shaking act.

"I'll ask you one question," said Mervil, "before I return to the general situation. And I'd like you to reply in a spirit of honest realism. We know your record at New Central Electric. What do you think of the way you've been treated there?"

"I'm bitter about it. Some men I thought were my friends or, if *not* that, at least decent colleagues ratted on me. I'll admit there are more rats about than I imagined. Perhaps it's the new style. I don't like it one little bit."

"Rather naive, if you'll allow me to say so," said Mervil, "but honest. Now I can continue. The question isn't whether you like the way things are going—for there they are and you can't stop them—but whether you're ready to use them or merely let them use you, with more bitterness to follow. And it must be one or the other quite soon. This mass process is rapidly accelerating as it was bound to do.

"There's no need to shake our heads over it," Mervil continued, "even if we're feeling benevolent and noble. At last people in the mass are getting what they want. They want reasonable security, food and clothes and shelter and medical attention, some education but not too much, easy work, no trouble, no worry, no loneliness and fear, mass emotions, mass entertainment, a smooth road from cradle to grave.

"Now here is something I've proved over and over again, risking my fortune, my career. Move in that direction, along the smooth road, and at once you succeed. Go the other way and you're up against a wall. Just try selling the mob some real freedom and not just empty talk about it, some hard work, responsibility, solitude and thought, any prospect of suffering—and see how many buyers you have. Very well, we can give them what they want, are giving them what they want."

Ravenstreet merely nodded. He did not know exactly what he wanted to say, and he sensed a certain impatience in Mervil.

"Now this new stuff, if it's what this fellow Sepman claims it is, will help them and will help us." Mervil was brisker now.

"No more worry, no more anxiety," he went on. "No more queer thoughts and unpleasant feelings. Remember, that's the freedom they want. We'll have to lay on a very big publicity campaign at first, of course, just to establish the name of the stuff, but that's routine — the battle will be more than half won before it

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"Married 8 years yet she still has wedding day hands . . ." says Aunt Jenny

"When I met Mrs. McIntyre at her home at 82 Campbell Pde., Bondi, N.S.W., I noticed her hands right away," adds Aunt Jenny. "They are beautiful despite 8 years of housework and looking after a husband and child". Mrs. McIntyre gives all the credit to Velvet's extra-soapy suds. "It's the kindest soap a housewife can use, Aunt Jenny" she said.

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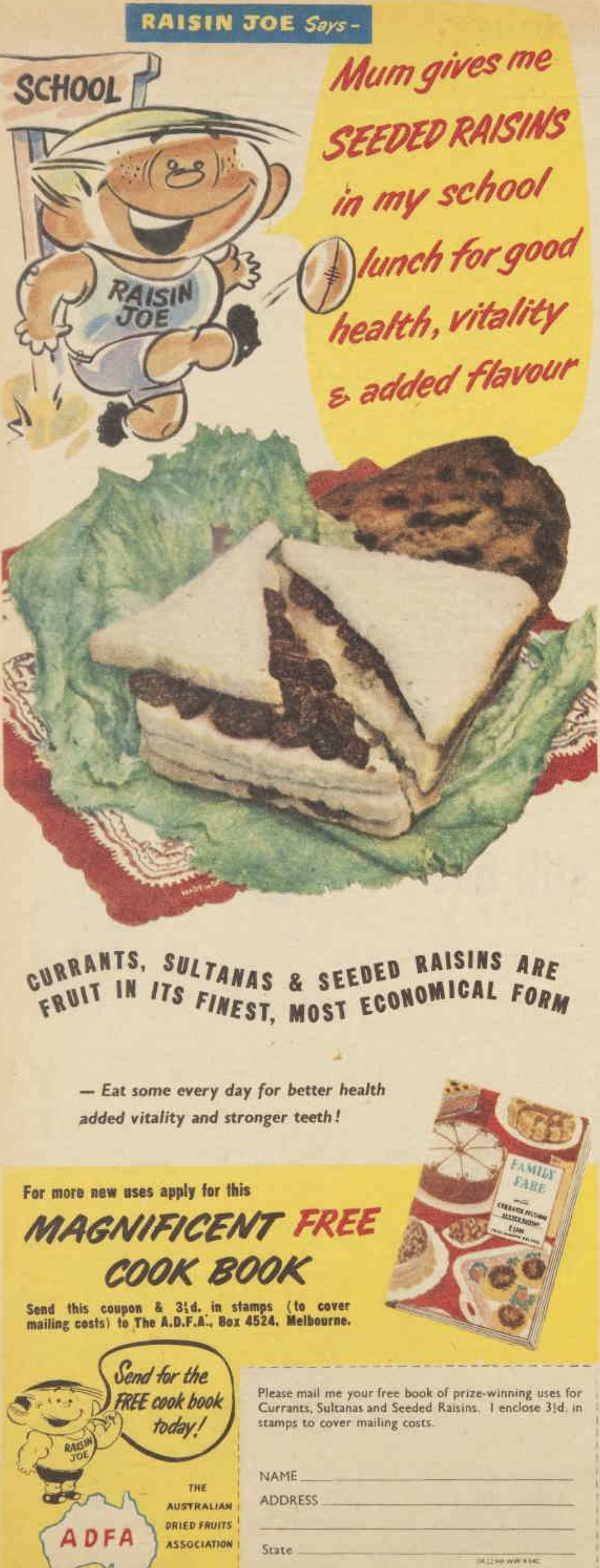

Continuing . . . . The Magicians

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starts. If the stuff begins to replace alcohol, as it easily might if it can be manufactured cheaply on a gigantic scale, then that's a gain, too, because it looks like being more dependable in its effect and the manufacture of it can be a monopoly. Well, Ravenstreet, test the stuff."

He got up and was clearly anxious to rid himself of his guest, so Ravenstreet rose, too.

"I might manage another tablet or two if you're uncertain, but these samples are precious at the moment. Give me your answer as soon as you can. You come in with Karney and myself, with the idea of organising and controlling the manufacturing end. Once you've agreed, I'll put you in touch with Sepman, of course. Glad to have seen you here."

He turned abruptly, almost as if Ravenstreet had now ceased to exist for him. "Prisk, when and where's my next appointment?"

"Here in ten minutes, Chief."

"I'll drop you, Ravenstreet," said Karney. And as they went out together, he added: "It's quite early. Perhaps a drink somewhere."

"No, thanks. Just drop me at my club, if you don't mind." And he named it, saying no more until they were sitting in Karney's landaulette.

"Well, what about his lordship?" asked Karney as soon as he had given his chauffeur his orders.

"It's a new type to me," Ravenstreet began carefully.

"No, no, not a type at all. Don't make a mistake there. Only one Mervil. But go on."

"Impressive—in a queer way. Though I wasn't impressed by that performance at the end. That I've-done-with-you-who's-next performance. I've caught it before, and I much prefer ordinary politeness."

"Sorry, Ravenstreet, but you're wrong again. It wasn't laid on to impress you. Mervil just is like that. He has a lot to do, and he just goes ahead and does it. He isn't quite human. Ask Prisk."

"I don't think I want to ask Prisk," said Ravenstreet.

"Well, take my word for it. I'm tough — as most men around town will tell you—but that little man, who's anything really but a little man, can turn me inside out in ten minutes. You must know what I mean."

"Yes, I know what you mean."

"You sound depressed."

"I am. Though I can't tell you exactly why."

"Well, if you still feel like this in half an hour's time, you'd better try your sample of Sepman Eighteen. The conditions might be just right, and it's a case of the-sooner-the-better, isn't it?"

Up in his rather cheerless club bedroom, feeling rather worse if anything, with some nameless anxiety gnawing away at the back of his mind, he decided to take Karney's advice. He crushed the tablet and washed it down with water. Then he undressed slowly, put a dressing-gown over his pyjamas, lit a cigarette, and stretched out in the armchair, waiting for results.

But soon he forgot he was making an experiment. He told himself what a fool he had been not to see the meeting with Mervil for what it was—a wonderful opportunity to be productive and busy and important again. With some technical assistance he could soon get a big new factory going or if necessary adapt a suitable old one to the job. He had had several good ideas that were not much use to New Central Electric but might be wanted here.

He saw himself picking a staff of keen youngsters, making a fresh start with the right types. Then there would be some large-scale planning with Mervil, giving the masses what they wanted; fun and games on a high level behind the scenes with Karney and Prisk.

Life was all right, a good show really, so long as you didn't expect too much from it, didn't sit about moping, tore into some work all day and then amused yourself at night. Why had it taken him so long to be sensible?

He had a telephone in his bedroom and now it rang, startling him out of his cheerful reverie. Prisk was at the other end, chuckling.

"Took a chance on your not having turned in, Ravenstreet, old boy. Had a sort of a hunch you might be trying out our Sepman sample. Right? How's it doing?"

Of course it must have been Sepman's stuff that had blotted out his mysterious feeling of anxiety and had made him look at things sensibly and cheerfully.

"Seems to work with me, Prisk. In fact, you can tell Lord Mervil that so far I'm all for it and I'm looking forward to another meeting as soon as he can manage one. And, of course, I'd like to talk to this chap Sepman."

"I'll fix it, chummy." Prisk sounded delighted. "Just get the okay first from the Chief. I'll tell him what you said. He'll be pleased. All the best, old boy!"

Ravenstreet went to bed already feeling like one of Mervil's elite.

. . . . .

Ravenstreet's country house was called Broxley Manor; it was some twenty miles south of Birmingham and about ten miles west of Stratford-on-Avon. In the middle of the week following his dinner with Mervil he was going down there, driving himself.

Just beyond Chipping Campden he heard a jet fighter tearing and screaming somewhere up high, and then after a few moments he stopped the car to listen properly, and if possible to see what was happening, for there were signs now that the aircraft was in trouble. He thought he saw it come down like a screeching rocket only a few miles ahead of him.

He waited, then saw the flash in the blue haze over the rise and heard the explosion. He drove on, making speed.

At the crossroads about three miles south of Broxley was an admirable old inn, the White Horse, where he had sometimes had a meal and had often had a drink. Well, he would have no more meals and drinks there. It was a smoking ruin.

He pushed his way through the little crowd that had already assembled, to see if he could do anything to help. The local police sergeant, whom he knew, was there.

"Nothing to be done that hasn't been done, I'm afraid, Sir Charles," said the sergeant, mopping the sweat off his face. "Pilot must ha' baled out an' the plane come down like a mad thing an' hit the end fair an' square. Old Albert was doin' his hens — so he's only a nasty case o' shock—but his missis an' the two maids are goners, all right. We're not sure about Perkins—that's the odd-job chap as looked after the bar. If he was there, then he's had it, too, but he might be out somewhere, seein' it's afternoon. Can't tell yet ——"

"Perkins is safe." Somebody had joined them.

"How d'you know?" the sergeant demanded sharply, rattled by this interruption. "Who are you?"

"Perkins went out on his bicycle after lunch. My name is Wayland, Sergeant. I was staying here with two friends. We are all safe. We we[re in] the shelter at the far e[nd of] the garden when the aero[plane] hit the house."

"Glad to hear that, M[r.] er—Wayland," cried the [ser]geant apologetically. "Sor[ry to] be so sharp with you—but [I'm] a bit on edge, naturally. [I] wanted to know about [the] three—only ones stayin' [here] weren't you? Well, [that] settles that. Lost all your [lug]gage, though, Mr. Wayland, eh?"

"No, we had it with us."

The sergeant stared. "F[unny] idea! Just goin', perhaps. Well, I haven't time to w[ork] that one out. Must ge[t on.] Oh—this is Sir Charles Ra[ven]street, gentleman who live[s at] Broxley Manor close by." [And] the sergeant bustled off, [leav]ing the other two to [take] stock of each other.

Wayland smiled at Ra[ven]street. He was a spare, el[derly] man, wearing a close-fi[tting] green jacket and knic[ker]bockers. Observing him [more] closely, Ravenstreet saw [that] he was far older than he [had] appeared to be, for his de[eply] tanned, clean-shaven face [was] covered with tiny wrin[kles] and through the tan were [vis]ible the dark spots of age.

He wore no hat and the [im]mense bald dome of his h[ead] shone in the sun.

"I'm upset about th[is,"] Ravenstreet confessed. "I o[ften] came here. These people w[ere] friends of mine, Mr. Wayland."

"They were good people. [I] tried to warn them. But [of] course——" And he mad[e a] little shrugging movement.

Ravenstreet decided to [let] this go without comment. T[he] man was probably far m[ore] shaken than he pretended [to] be. "You were staying here?"

"Three of us, yes," repl[ied] Wayland, smiling. "My [two] friends are foreigners. We m[eet] every few years. Mostly abro[ad.] But this time I brought th[em] here. For what you mi[ght] call a little conference."

Ravenstreet came to a [de]cision, though how he arri[ved] at it he never knew then [or] afterwards.

"Mr. Wayland, as the [ser]geant told you, I have a ho[use] near here. I'm alone th[ere] except for a domestic staff [that] badly needs more to do. [If] you and your two friends wo[uld] care to stay, I'll be glad [to] put you up for a few days. [I] have a car here. We can [be] there in ten minutes."

"Thank you. I will bri[ng] my friends. And if you [are] wondering if there is anyth[ing] you can do to help here, I c[an] assure you, Sir Charles, th[ere] is now nothing to be done."

Wayland's two friends look[ed] at a first glance like a vau[de]ville act. One was immens[ely] tall, thin, beaky; the other sh[ort] and broad, a tub of butt[er.] The tall one was French, [by] name Marot. The fat one [was] called Perperek, and must ha[ve] originally come from some p[art] of the Balkans. His Engl[ish] was bold but sketchy, and [his] accent so bad that it to[ok] Ravenstreet some time [to] understand what he was s[ay]ing, but he seemed to be [a] friendly soul, his enorm[ous] swarthy face wore a rich [smile,] and he continual[ly] chuckled and bubbled.

Monsieur Marot spoke [ex]cellent English, but his spe[ech] was as spare and gaunt as [his] giant frame: a man more [un]like the typical garrul[ous] Frenchman could hardly [be] imagined.

Like Wayland, these [two] soon gave Ravenstreet the [im]pression that they were m[uch] older than they had at f[irst] appeared to be. All three, [in] fact, made him feel that th[ey] were old men who had so[me]how contrived to maintain [a] vitality of mind and bo[dy.] They made a very rum tri[o.]

To be continued

Continuing . . . The Reckless Heart

from page 5

look guided into a becoming swirl; the dress did something for her. She looked almost—almost arresting.

"Mary?" A wrinkled face peered in the door. It was old Maggie, the housekeeper, who had been with them ever since Mary was a baby. "Mary, you look beautiful!"

"Really?" No one had ever called her that before. No one.

"Mr. Dan's downstairs. He sent up this box. Mary, you take my breath away. Isn't that a dress of Mrs. Cartwright's, though? She won't like that. She won't even like you looking so nice. She likes to be the belle of the ball herself."

"Oh, Maggie!"

Maggie was the only person Mary knew who hadn't succumbed to Zoe's charm.

Mary pinned on the flowers and started downstairs. Dan was waiting.

At the foot of the stairs she saw him standing there, urbane and relaxed, talking to a small group of early arrivals.

"Mary!" He turned at that moment and walked to her.

It was impossible not to smile, not to feel alive with happiness, not to dare hope for what she knew she wanted, but feared could not be.

Then she saw Zoe looking at her from across the room. It was a curious look—speculative, searching. She'd never seen Zoe look at her in quite that peculiar way before.

"Glad you discarded the stripes; you look like a dryad," Dan was saying.

He was staring as though he had never seen her before.

"But come along and help me pick out a canape. You made them all yourself, I suppose?"

"I was up at dawn, slaving away," she told him.

They were back at their usual bantering; casual, light. She didn't care. It was enough to be with him.

"Darling." It was Zoe, her voice very sweet. Too sweet? "If you wanted to wear a dress of mine, dear," she whispered, "why didn't you ask me? That one isn't quite suitable."

"Oh—I didn't think you'd mind," Mary said, confusedly. After all, Zoe had told her to borrow what she wanted.

"This child!" Zoe was speaking to Dan now, her voice quite clear. "She's so athletic,—look at that straight, lovely back! But, honestly, I wish she'd level off a little. A fine thing when she's getting so muscular she can't even wear my old-lady clothes without them pulling in odd directions!"

"She looks pretty good to me." Dan was unsmiling.

"Good! Oh, she always does. But, Dan—come with me for just a moment. I've some very dear friends I want you to look up. Mary, darling, we'll only be a moment. You don't mind, do you?"

Mary stared after them. Zoe just didn't do things like that!

Maggie's acid comments came back to her now. She'd always thought Maggie just didn't see Zoe as she really was.

Perhaps, instead, it was she, Mary, who was looking at the real Zoe for the first time.

She nibbled a canape, adjusted a vase of flowers, and all the time was aware of Zoe and Dan talking.

Dan didn't look exactly at ease, but he was making no move to disentangle himself.

"Mary!" several people said to her. "You're looking positively ravishing tonight!"

Had something—the spring, or being in love, or the green dress—really given her a touch of real beauty? And was Zoe for the first time in her life actually a little jealous?

"Hello, I believe I'm taking you in to dinner." It was a tall, rather too-good-looking young man.

"I am taking her in to dinner." Dan was there before he finished the sentence. "Sorry. Come along, Mary."

"Mary—" It was Zoe again. "Could you dash into the kitchen and see about the salad? You know I'm not good at anything domestic, and the cook simply doesn't understand salads. You're the only person who does."

"Tonight," Dan said firmly, "somebody else can understand the salad. I've got first claim on this girl."

Eating dinner with Dan, she was conscious of a constraint such as she had not experienced before. She had known constraint with him, but felt it to be the unacknowledged emotional tie between them, but this was different.

She couldn't even make herself talk naturally. Dan was being very amusing about something which had happened on one of his expeditions.

"Yes," she said. "Oh!" She felt wooden, stupid. One reason for this was Zoe, who was talking quite loudly across the room about her stepdaughter's athletic prowess.

She was saying nothing derogatory, and yet she was, somehow, making Mary out a complete freak, and revealing herself as the really desirable type—feminine, helpless.

Mary had never been quite so uncomfortable in her life.

"Oh, and Mary—darling—would you be an angel and run up to my room and get me some cigarettes?" Zoe rose and walked towards her, her slim body moving easily. "I can only smoke those Turkish ones, you know."

"All right." Mary was glad of an excuse to leave the room. She got up, became somehow entangled in the drapery of her skirt, and collided with Zoe.

To her horror a whole plateful of food spilled down the side of the borrowed green dress.

"Oh—and this is yours—" she said painfully.

"You might have been a little more careful," snapped Zoe. Then she quickly controlled herself. "Oh, that's all right, dear. Heavens, don't let it upset you—this is your evening!"

But there was unmistakable anger and bitterness smouldering under the limpid voice.

"It's the dress you got me in Paris, Dick," she said quietly to her husband. "Mary borrowed it—the child doesn't seem to have a decent stitch of her own. Now, Mary, dear, run up and change. Forget about the cigarettes and don't worry about the dress."

Oh, horrors! Mary yanked off the dress and tried to sponge it with hurried, desperate movements. She grabbed one of her own dresses. It didn't matter to her which one. She was nothing but a muscle girl; she wouldn't try being a dryad again.

Everything had gone wrong. Why, why, was Zoe doing this to her? Tonight of all nights.

Strange how, by just her attitude and a few adroit remarks, Zoe had been able to make her feel awkward and miserable.

Mary was sorry she had ruined the dress, but she knew it wasn't because of that mishap that Zoe had snapped at her. No, her stepmother's behaviour was motivated by something deeper. Something she only now began to understand.

I thought Zoe loved me. She hates me.

She went back downstairs only because she had to.

Dan was in the little group round Zoe now, laughing and talking with her.

Throughout the rest of the evening Mary avoided Dan.

She had a feeling that he was sorry for her, that he felt only pity for the clumsy youngster who had been his playmate this winter, and the thought was more than she could stand.

As people started to leave, Mary went upstairs without even seeing Dan again. She was being rude, but she didn't care.

She sat in her room. Her party was over. Her party. It had been Zoe's party. They were always Zoe's parties.

She could see from her window the tree where Dan had kissed her that Christmas Eve.

But there is no comfort in remembering someone's kiss when you are sure they will never kiss you again.

The phone shrilled suddenly. She went to answer it.

"Mary!" It was Dan. "I can't do it. I thought I could leave you; I was so sure I didn't want to tangle my life up with someone else's again . . . But I can't go away without you. Mary—come with me."

This couldn't be Dan. Not with such urgency in his voice.

"Mary—do you hear me?"

"Yes, Dan."

"Will you come with me? Will you, darling?"

Dan. He wanted her after all. "Yes. Oh, yes!"

"Meet me at the big tree. As for Zoe—Mary, why didn't you tell me how things were?

"You were breath-taking tonight as you came down the stairs; that was what she couldn't stand," Dan said grimly. "Zoe can't share the limelight. But let's not waste time talking about her. We can travel north tonight and be married at once. Darling—do you know that I've loved you all along? Could you guess—"

"Then why didn't you tell me?" She had to say it.

"I was only thinking of myself, of being hurt again, then, tonight, the way you were being treated made me start thinking of you. Mary, it's going to be only you from now on. Hurry, darling! I'll be waiting."

"All right, Dan." It couldn't be true. It just couldn't be.

"Mary—one more thing. I love you. I want you with me for ever."

She went back to her room in a dream. But this wasn't a dream; it was suddenly real.

Frantically she yanked out a suitcase, a coat. Then she stopped. Someone was standing at the door.

"It's all packed, Mary."

"Zoe. What in the—"

"I packed it. Just enough, and not so fancy that it looks suspicious. If that Dan didn't ask you to elope and escape with him tonight, after the wicked-stepmother act I pulled, he's not the man I think he is."

"Zoe, you—you were acting!

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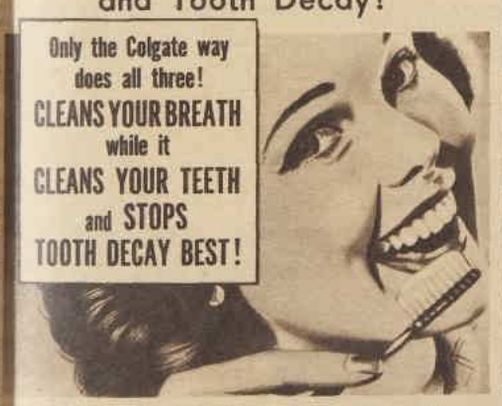

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Introducing Debbie, leading lady in a cookery feature for teenagers. This is the first of a series which will give each month a basic recipe for beginners, demonstrated by our teenage chef.

1. Grease two 8-inch sandwich-tins evenly and thoroughly. The best way is to melt the butter in a small container and use a pastry brush. Beginners should put a piece of greased paper in the base of each greased tin. Preheat the oven to moderate.

2. Next, carefully separate the egg-whites from the egg-yolks. Crack each egg in the centre of the shell, then break it open, immediately tilting it to one side so that the yolk remains in one half. Then carefully tip the yolk from one shell to the other until all the white slips away.

Debbie makes a sponge

By following Debbie's example, you too can make a successful sponge.

SHE always uses the basic sponge mixture but varies it by joining layers with different fillings and using another frosting. Sometimes she simply dusts the top with sifted icing sugar.

Like Debbie, measure your ingredients accurately and remember to use level spoon measurements.

Always preheat the oven to moderate, and place the tins diagonally on the same shelf. This bakes the cake correctly.

Never test a sponge with a skewer. A cooked sponge shrinks from the sides of the tin and is elastic to the touch.

BASIC SPONGE RECIPE

Four large eggs, ¾ cup sugar, 1 cup self-raising flour, 2 tablespoons cornflour, pinch salt, 1 dessertspoon butter, 3 tablespoons hot water.

Separate whites from yolks of eggs. Beat whites until stiff and frothy, gradually add sugar, beating until sugar is dissolved. Add egg-yolks one at a time, beating well. Fold in sifted flour, cornflour, and salt, then butter melted in hot milk. Fill into greased 8in. tins, bake in moderate oven approximately 20 minutes. Cool on cake-cooler, fill and ice when cold.

Note: For 7in. tins use 3 large eggs, reduce the sugar by 1 tablespoon, and omit cornflour.

For Teenagers

TUTTI-FRUTTI FILLING

Juice of 1 lemon and ½ orange, grated rind of ½ lemon, ¾ cup sugar, 2 tablespoons cornflour, ½ cup water, 2 egg-yolks, 1 dessertspoon butter or substitute.

Strain lemon and orange juice, place in small saucepan with lemon rind, sugar, and cornflour blended with water. Stir until boiling, simmer 3 minutes. Cool slightly, stir in beaten egg-yolks and butter. Continue stirring until butter is melted and absorbed. Allow to cool before filling into sponge.

MOCK CREAM FILLING

Two tablespoons butter, 3½ tablespoons sugar, 3 to 4 dessertspoons milk, vanilla.

Cream butter and sugar thoroughly until soft, white, and fluffy. Add milk a teaspoon at a time, creaming after each addition until liquid is absorbed. Continue adding milk until all sugar is dissolved. Flavor with vanilla, spread between layers of sponge.

Debbie suggests spreading the bottom layer lightly with strawberry or raspberry jam before adding cream.

SNOW FROSTING

Two egg-whites, 1½ cups sugar, ¼ cup water, pinch salt, ½ teaspoon vanilla, ½ teaspoon lemon juice.

Beat egg-whites very slightly, add sugar, water, and salt. Beat over boiling water for 14 minutes or until mixture is stiff, white, and holds its shape. Remove from heat, add flavoring, and continue beating until slightly cooled and very thick. Spread over cake, using a broad-bladed, flexible knife or spatula.

3. Beat the egg-whites stiffly, gradually add the sugar and continue beating until the sugar dissolves and the mixture stands in peaks. Add the egg-yolks one at a time, beat until mixture is light and holds shape for ten seconds.

4. Sift the flour three times with the cornflour and salt, then fold it into the mixture, taking the spoon down one side of the basin, across the base, and up the other. When flour is absorbed, fold in the butter melted in hot milk.

5. Fill the mixture into the prepared tins, then tilt the tins to make the surface even. Place them in the oven and bake for approximately 20 minutes. Do not open the oven door for at least 15 minutes. Cool the layers on a cake-cooler and remove the paper. Let stand until they are cold.

6. The finished cake (above) with tutti-frutti filling and snow frosting. Join the layers with the filling when the filling is nearly cold and frost the cake when the filling is quite cold. Spread the frosting quickly so that the cake is covered before the frosting sets. Let the cake stand for at last one hour before cutting.

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Save time and money with

TODAY'S BIGGEST BREAKFAST BARGAIN

Lively flavour!

Open your packet and thrill to the aroma of these big, golden flakes! They make you feel hungry just to look at them! *Hear them rustle* on to your plate. So they should! They've been roasted, toasted and crisped to do just that! *Pick up your spoon* and crunch into the biggest, crispest, most luscious corn flakes ever made — Kellogg's Corn Flakes.

Deep-down Goodness!

Nutrition Experts say that one plate of Kellogg's Corn Flakes with milk and sugar plus fresh fruit and bread and butter (or toast) gives you *one third* of your daily food needs. Here's a complete, satisfying breakfast in itself!

24 big breakfasts in every large packet!

Think of the money you save! Compare the cost of one serving of Kellogg's Corn Flakes with that of meat, eggs, fish, bacon these days! Only 30 seconds to serve—no greasy grillers or pots to wash.

Kellogg's CORN FLAKES

breakfast need not be hot to warm YOU!

*We get our fuel from energy-giving foods (chiefly carbohydrates) that are burned up in our body. Kellogg's Corn Flakes are *extremely* rich in carbohydrates — so they give you energy and keep you warm. 24 big breakfasts in every 16-oz. packet.

CS3-IR

Party sweet wins £5

FRUIT meringue squares, filled with your favorite fruit and decorated with whipped cream and cherries, wins this week's main prize of £5.

Squares of cake coated with a thin layer of meringue and browned lightly in the oven provide a pleasant change for a special-occasion sweet.

THERE is an interesting story attached to the consolation prize recipe for mayonnaise. It was served at the official banquet at Canberra in honor of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who asked for the recipe and complimented the chef on its excellence.

All spoon measurements in our recipes are level.

MERINGUE DESSERT

One slab-cake, 2 egg-whites, ½ cup sugar, pinch salt, 1 small tin chopped preserved fruit or any home-cooked fruit.

Beat egg-whites with salt, gradually add sugar, beat to meringue consistency. Cut cake into 3in. squares, coat with meringue, building sides up slightly to form a cavity in the centre. Bake in a slow oven 20 minutes or until set and lightly browned. Allow to cool. Pile well-drained fruit on meringue, decorate with whipped cream and cherries.

First Prize of £5 to Mrs. M. Wright, 100 Parker St., Devonport, Tas.

MAYONNAISE

Two egg-yolks, ½ teaspoon French mustard, 1 tablespoon salad oil, 1 dessertspoon white vinegar, 10 drops concentrated savory flavoring, pinch salt, pepper, 1 dessertspoon cream.

Break egg-yolks, mix with mustard. Add oil and vinegar alternately, a few drops at a time. Add savory flavoring, salt and pepper, stirring o way only with a wooden spo Mix well, stir in cream.

Consolation Prize of £1 Mr. A. Orchard, 11 Milde Court, Jeffrey St., Kirrib N.S.W.

BAKED FRUIT PUDDI

Two ounces butter or su stitute, ¾ cup sugar, 2oz. s raising flour, 2 small ripe b anas, 2 passionfruit, juice o lemon, 2 eggs, 1 cup milk.

Cream butter or substitu with sugar, add sifted flo Add passionfruit pulp, w lightly mashed bananas, a lemon juice mixed with m and egg-yolks. Beat egg-whi stiffly, fold into fruit mixtu Pour into greased ovenw dish, stand in pan of wa water, bake in moderate o 30 to 40 minutes or until and top lightly browned.

Consolation Prize of £1 Miss G. Walker, "Dru ossie," Yinnar South, Gip land, Vic.

ELEPHANTS, ducks, puppies, and rosebud designs are included with the 17 motifs on embroidery transfer No. 199A. Price of the 10½in. by 24in. sheet is 1/-, plus 3d. postage. Send orders to our Needlework Department. See address page 53.

Continuing . . . .

The Reckless Hear

from page 47

You had me completely convinced! I despised you!

"But, Zoe, what made you put on the 'act'? Why—"

"Varenka. Tolstoy's Varenka. This man wanted to marry her and they would have been wonderfully happy, but he was afraid of marriage. He was thinking only of himself, and no one gave him a push to make him think of her, of making her happy, and what it could mean to them both. Just like you and Dan. I," Zoe concluded happily, "pushed."

"But—I don't want an unwilling love," Mary cried out. "I want a love like yours and my father's . . . Do you think it's fair to trick a man as we've tricked Dan?"

"You make him happy and forget about the trickery," Zoe said sternly. "You speak of your father and me—what a time I had with him! He thought I was too young for him, he thought I'd miss the stage, yet I was sure he cared for me. I had to get stranded here in a bad play and convince him I'd starve if he didn't do something about me. To clinch things," she said plaintively, "I think I fainted."

Mary was crying in Zoe's arms.

A moment later Mary stole down the stairs and made her way towards the side door.

Why hadn't she been able to guess that Zoe was only pretending her subtle cruelties?

Zoe, who was selfless enou to spend miserable hours at rink just to help her little st daughter learn to skate, w was thoughtful enough to m member that it was choco cake that an orphaned ch loved most! Zoe, who lov people to be happy.

Zoe, a woman who enjoy appearing at her best, but w had, tonight, exaggerated her little weaknesses and va ties to appear at her worst playing the villain so that t Mary, could play the heroine

All the time Zoe seemed be seeking attention herself was actually throwing a sp light on me, Mary thought.

Dan would never have re ised he loved me—except Zoe. Crazy, marvellous Z

The old childish prayer turned: If I could only be Zoe. She meant it from depth of her heart.

But she was not thinking o of the shining hair, of the c or the voice; she was think of her kindness, her sympat her understanding of anot person's heart.

Maybe some day she wo learn to be a little like Zoe.

She was out of the door and into the soft spring ni and she started to run, forg ting about Zoe, because could see Dan waiting be the tree.

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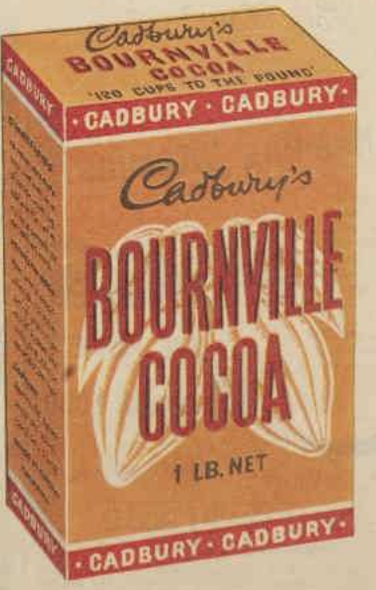
COCOA
is good for you

Delicious, nourishing, economical to use. That's Bournville Cocoa. It has everything to recommend it as a top favourite for the whole family. Because Cocoa has everything people want as a hot winter beverage for breakfast and supper. It's delicious to taste, it's nourishing, it's warming, it's easy to prepare—and where will you find a value like Cocoa which gives you 120 cups to the pound?

There's really nothing as good as Cadbury's Bournville Cocoa to make you feel deliciously warm and well.



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EACH PACK CONTAINS **4** LUSCIOUS CENTRES —3 pieces of each.

1. STRAWBERRY CREAM. A delicious taste-sensation of freshly-picked strawberries.
2. CREAM CARAMEL. A rich, creamy caramel-flavour that lingers on your tongue.
3. TURKISH DELIGHT. A joy to every taste. Rich and exotic.
4. FRUIT SUNDAE. An exciting blend of choice, fresh-fruit flavours.

"Snack" is available in ¼-lb. and 2-oz. blocks.

Made by MacRobertson — The Great Name in Confectionery

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Needing Vitamins?

Then enjoy eggs regularly! Eggs include **every known vitamin excepting Vitamin C!** Give more actual food for your money! Are **twice as rich as lean beef** in body-building protein!

EGGS ...THE PERFECT *All-round* FOOD

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THE WILD PLACE

By Kathryn Hulme

This book is a fascinating picture of life and work in an UNRRA camp in Bavaria. The author was Deputy Director of the camp, and she has made excellent use of the great variety of character and incident which came under observation.

Price 15/6.
From all Booksellers.

AMERICAN-STYLED THREE-PIECE SUIT consisting of a skirt, jacket, and a sleeveless sweater is typical of the smart designs included in our 1954 Knitting Book, which is now on sale at newsagents, bookstalls, and our offices. Directions and illustrations are given for 41 garments. Price, 1/6.

Contest winner

A clever idea of converting the stand of an old stove into an occasional table wins the £3/3/- cash prize in our homemakers' weekly contest this week.

MRS. R. PRESTON, 75 Outlook Crescent, Bardon, Brisbane, sent in this winning entry.

Each week a £3/3/- cash prize is awarded to the reader who submits the best idea on how to make something new from something old.

Mrs. Preston tells how her prize-winning idea was carried out.

"My husband made me a nice occasional table using an old stove we found on a dump.

"We brought the stove home, dismantled the top from the stand, cleaned the legs and under-tray, and gave it all a thorough coat of metal-preserving paint. When this was dry the stand was painted with enamel, and a glass top, the only thing we had to buy, was fitted.

"The snapshots enclosed show the finished table and another stove-stand a neighbor gave us after seeing what we had done with the one we found. This second stand we intend to use as a table for a fishpond and the under-tray for a cactus garden."

Now, send in your idea with a full description and a rough sketch or snapshots to illustrate exactly what was done.

Address your entry or entries to The Editor, Homemaker Department, The Australian Women's Weekly, Box 4088, G.P.O., Sydney.

OCCASIONAL TABLE (below) made from the stand of a discarded old stove. Above, the type of stand used for the conversion.

Don't let your hands say 'Housework'

SOFTASILK PREVENTS
- Rough red hands.
- Dryness caused by harsh washing soaps.
- Wind and weather chapping.
- Coarse elbows.
- Hard skin on palms and fingers.

Your hands need the rich, protective oils that neutralize the drying effect of harsh soaps and detergents and the chapping caused by wind and weather.

Use fragrant creamy Softasilk after every household task and see how your hands stay soft as silk!

It's handier in a tube . . . keep it handy!

Small, Large, Economy Sizes.

HAND BEAUTY CREAM

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Single girls, yes! It's important to all girls.

And it's important for all girls to give Meds a trial. Buy a packet to-day and learn for yourself the freedom of this fascinating new protection.

The Meds booklet tells you the secrets of a fuller life; of more confidence and self assurance; of how Meds can help you. You'll enjoy reading it and it's absolutely free.

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Fashion PATTERNS

BLOUSE BARGAIN PATTERN

F3296.—An easy-to-make blouse with short sleeves and a trim collar. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Requires 2yds. 36in. material. Price, 2/-.

F3294.—Youthful suit with a loose, collarless jacket and bracelet sleeves. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Requires 3yds. 54in. material. Price, 4/6.

F3295.—Slimly fitting frock with matching hip-length jacket. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Requires 4yds. 54in. material. Price, 4/6.

F3298.—Practical and comfortable pyjamas for boys. Sizes 29in., 31in., 33in., and 37in. lengths for 2, 3, 4, and 5-6 years. Requires 2½yds. 36in. material. Price, 2/6.

FASHION PATTERNS and Needlework Notions may be obtained immediately from Fashion Patterns Pty. Ltd., 645 Harris Street, Ultimo, Sydney (postal address Box 4060, G.P.O., Sydney). Tasmanian readers should address orders to Box 66-D, G.P.O., Hobart; New Zealand readers to Box 666, G.P.O., Auckland.

F3299.—Girl's pretty and feminine nightdress. Sizes 29in., 33in., 37in., and 41in. lengths for 2, 4, 6, and 8 years. Requires 2½yds. 36in. material and 2½yds. embroidered edging. Price, 2/6.

F3297.—Simple but smart full-skirted dress with contrasting collar. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Requires 4yds. 54in. material and ½yd. 36in. contrast material. Price, 3/6.

NEEDLEWORK NOTIONS

No. 701.—PRAM OR COT COVER

The cosy pram or cot cover is soft lambtex and the color choice includes cream, primrose, pink, blue, and salmon. Size, 36in. x 36in. Price, 14/6; postage and registration, 2/- extra.

No. 702.—DUCHESSE SET

A dainty duchesse set with pretty flower-basket design is obtainable in cream or white linen, also sheer linen in blue, green, and lemon. The large mat is 17in x 11in. and the small mats are 8in. x 8in. Price of complete set, 8/11. Postage, 9d. extra.

No. 703.—HALF SLIP

A pretty and useful half slip in crisp white pique. The lace is not supplied. Sizes 24in., 26in., 28in., 30in. waist. Price, 24/11. Postage and registration, 3/6 extra.

No. 704.—SET OF HANDKERCHIEFS

An attractive handkerchief set with hemstitched edges. You can choose initialled or floral corners. Available in white, blue, lemon, pink, and green linen. Size 11in. x 11in. Price, 1/11. Postage, 4d. extra.

No. 705.—GIRL'S PINAFORE AND BLOUSE

The pinafore is good quality velveteen in American beauty, brown, and junior navy. Sizes, 18in. length for 2yrs., price, 22/6; 20in., 4yrs., price, 22/6. Postage and registration, 1/9 extra. Size 23in. length for 6yrs., price, 24/9; 27in., 8yrs., price, 24/9. Postage and registration, 2/- extra. The blouse is available in white, sky, pink, pale green, and lemon lawn. Sizes for 2yrs. and 4yrs., price, 8/11; 6yrs. and 8yrs., price, 7/6. Postage, 1/- extra.

NOTE: Please make a second color choice. No C.O.D. orders accepted. All Needlework Notions over 10/- sent by registered post.

new "three flowers" face powder keeps skin petal-fresh for hours—won't cake or streak

If you want to look your best *all* the time, change to Three Flowers—the new type face powder so popular everywhere. See how quickly lines and roughness disappear. See how softly lovely your skin feels. It will keep your skin lovely from wake-up to bedtime, despite wind and weather, heat and humidity. *In seven fashion-perfect shades.*

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in the large gay box, 3/9

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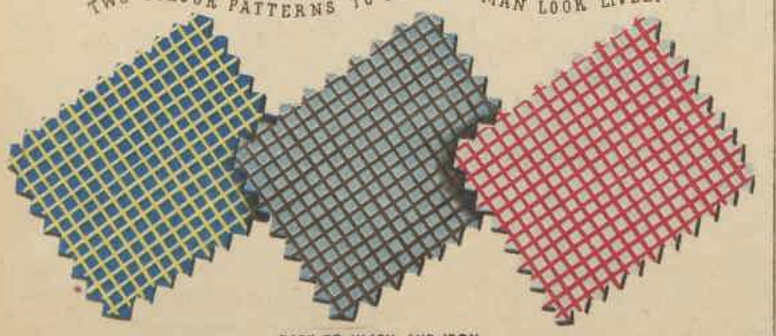
TWO-COLOUR PATTERNS TO MAKE A MAN LOOK LIVELY



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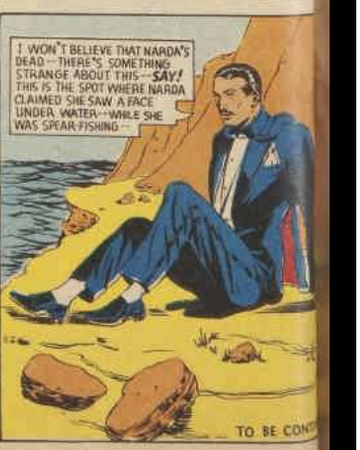
ONLY COUNTRY CLUB HAS THAT COUNTRY CLUB LOOK

Mandrake the Magician

MANDRAKE: Master magician, disbelieves PRINCESS NARDA'S tale when she says she saw a face peering at her while spear-fishing 25 feet under water. Later, they attend a fashion show of priceless jewellery, and Narda recognises one of the guards at the show as the owner of the face she saw. Acting as a spare model, Narda walks into the dressing-room just as the bogus guards are holding up the models. Kidnapping Narda, the thieves make their getaway. NOW READ ON:



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"TELL ME ANOTHER" says KLEENEX

BROKEN NAIL? DON'T WAIL

SPLIT A NAIL? CUT KLEENEX TISSUE TO FIT, STICK DOWN WITH POLISH — MORE POLISH OVER THE TOP. DRY, THEN VARNISH IN YOUR USUAL COLOR.

LET'S CURL UP

GOODBYE TO FRIZZY HAIR — TEAR KLEENEX INTO LONG STRIPS — WIND A CURL ROUND EACH STRIP — KNOT THE ENDS OF THE KLEENEX. IN A FEW HOURS — SMOOTH, SOFT WAVES.

MAKE-UP — AND KISS

KEEP YOUR LIPSTICK ON YOUR MOUTH. APPLY AS USUAL — BLOT HARD ON ABSORBENT KLEENEX TISSUE — POWDER YOUR LIPS LIGHTLY. (KLEENEX FOR REMOVING MAKE-UP, TOO.)

EYES RIGHT!

SORE, STRAINED EYES? SOAK TWO SOFT KLEENEX TISSUES IN LOTION, OR MILK. SQUEEZE OUT, PLACE OVER YOUR EYES, RELAX FOR 15 MINUTES. THEN WATCH THEM SPARKLE!

NOW SOLD EVERYWHERE IN 3 SIZES. 1/- 2/- 3/-

KS12-16

NEW, enticing, appetising SANDWICHES

Tired of those same old sandwiches? Try these unexpected and delicious fillings, made the Keen's way. Simple to prepare and so satisfying, they're deliciously different and refreshingly new!

- Raisins, chopped fine, and sparked with mixed Keen's Mustard.
- Chopped, salted peanuts blended with mixed Keen's Mustard.
- Combine 2 cups grated cheese, 1 tablespoon butter, 1 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon Mustard, dash cayenne, 2 well-beaten eggs, ½ cup milk. Cook and whip mixture until creamy thick and smooth.
- Blend ½ cup peanut butter, ½ cup chopped pickle, ½ teaspoon Mustard, 1½ tablespoons hot water, pinch of salt to taste. Beat ingredients until light, spread on white, brown or rye bread.

KEEN'S MUSTARD

makes all the difference!

V85

Keep Fresher

After your bath, use Cashmere Bouquet Talc lavishly. It leaves you fresh, fragrant and wonderfully cool.

Feel Smoother

Its silken protection insures against chafing, too, so pamper sensitive spots with extra Cashmere Bouquet!

Stay Dainter

And remember, Cashmere Bouquet Talc surrounds you with a romantic fragrance, the very spirit of personal daintiness.

Cashmere Bouquet Talc

BABY LOVES

the delightful, creamy lather of Cuticura Soap. The gentle cleansing and pure, soothing touch of this mildly medicated Soap is ideal for your baby's precious skin.

Use emollient Cuticura Ointment after the bath and at every change to soothe baby's soreness and deal sweetly with nappie rash. *Buy your Cuticura today.*

Cuticura SOAP

Fashion FROCKS

Ready to wear or cut out ready to make

"ANDREA."—A glamorous lingerie set in slipper satin. The color choice includes white, blue, pink, and cream. **Nightgown.** Ready to wear. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Price, 69/9. Postage and registration, 1/3 extra.

Cut Out Only. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Price, 50/6. Postage and registration, 2/6 extra. **Slip.** Ready to wear. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Price, 39/9. Postage and registration, 1/3 extra. Cut out only. Sizes 32in. to 38in. bust. Price, 27/3. Postage and registration, 1/3 extra.

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Complete Set. Ready to wear. Price, £6/13/9. Postage and registration, 3/6 extra. Complete Set. Cut out only. Price, £4/12/9. Postage and registration, 3/6 extra.

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Make Baby's Hair GROW CURLY
4 Weeks Treatment
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Stay as sweet as you are with

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GOT WORMS ?

Symptoms: Itchy nose, furred tongue, loss of appetite, disagreeable breath, grinding teeth, irritability, bowel disorders, disturbed sleep. Destroy worms by taking—

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In these biscuits also the protein and mineral salt content of the wheat grain used in their manufacture is retained.

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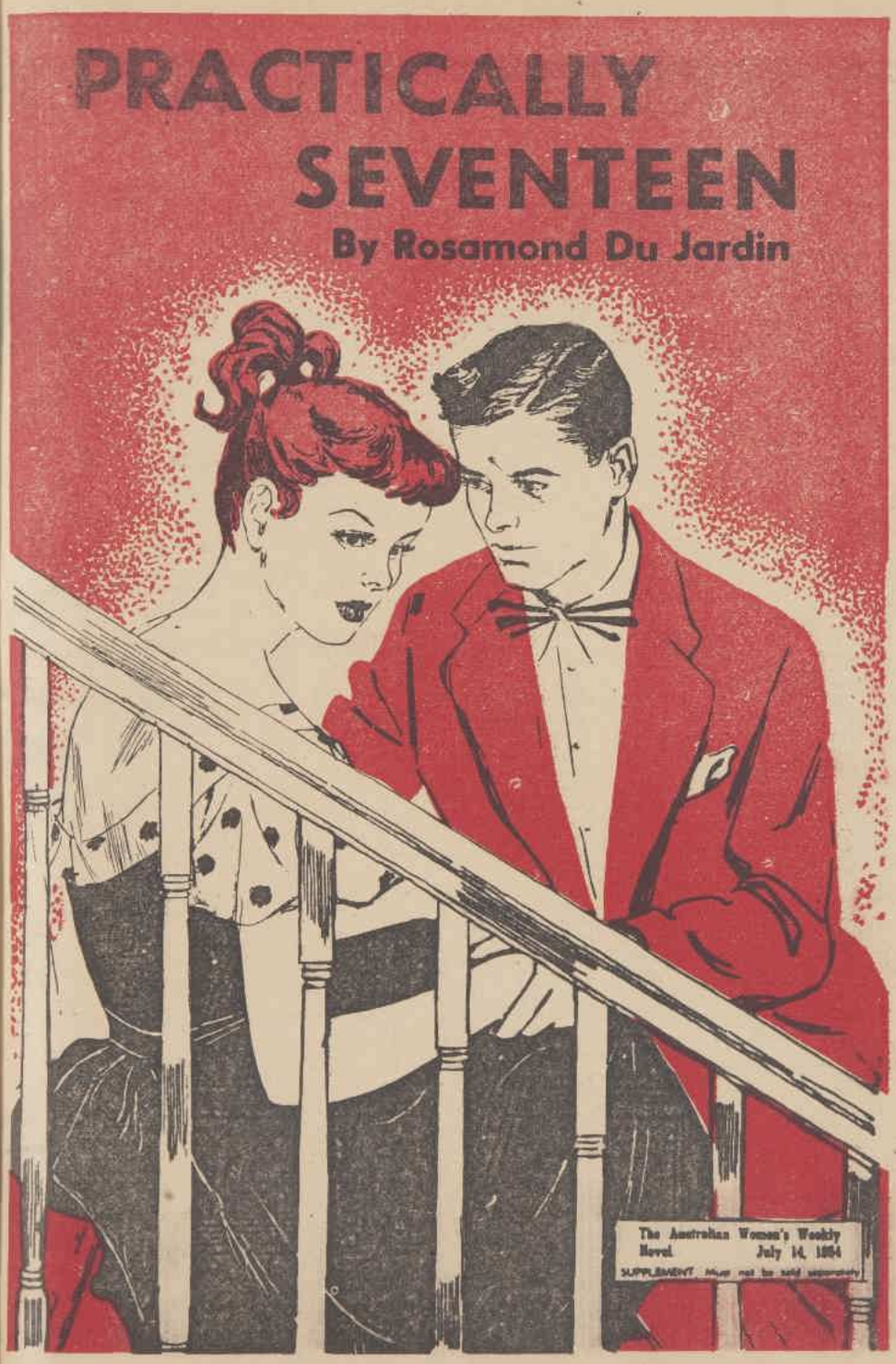
PRACTICALLY SEVENTEEN

By Rosamond Du Jardin



The Australian Women's Weekly
Novel July 14, 1954
SUPPLEMENT Must not be sold separately

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Supplement to The Australian Women's Weekly — July 14, 1954

PRACTICALLY SEVENTEEN

MY name is Tobey Heydon and I am practically seventeen years old, since my sixteenth birthday was five whole months ago. Actually Tobey is my middle name and my first name is Henrietta. My mother got sort of desperate when her third child turned out to be another girl, so she named me for my father.

But, thank Heaven, my grandmother's maiden name was Tobey. Otherwise it would have been too ghastly. People might have called me Henny for short and I would have simply died.

Ours is quite a large family, as families go nowadays. First there are my mother and father, who are pretty old, both in their forties. Still they are fairly modern in their ideas. My father is tall and thinnish and has a pleasant face with lots of laugh wrinkles. He claims that any man, completely surrounded by females in his own home, would go crazy without a sense of humor and that he has had to develop his in self defence.

Sometimes his wit is a little corny, as is often the case with older people. But none of us minds. He is really sweet, as fathers go. My mother is very well satisfied with him, too. Her only complaint is that his job as a salesman of plumbing supplies takes him away from home on occasional out-of-town trips, during which time she seems to miss him very much indeed.

My mother thinks she is overweight and she is always talking about dieting and losing ten pounds, although compared with the mothers of some of my friends she has a very nice figure.

Once in a while, usually when she is thinking of getting a new suit, she does go on a diet for a day or so. But I never knew her to lose more than a few pounds in this way and my father usually succeeds in kidding her out of the whole idea inside of a week. So then she goes back to baking chocolate cake and lemon cream pie instead of giving us fruit for dessert, and everybody's happy.

Both she and my father are beginning to get a little grey around the edges, but, as Dad says philosophically, grey hair is the penalty of having a family like ours. And even I will have to admit that things are seldom calm and quiet around our house or at least not for more than a few minutes at a time. So there may be something in what he says.

My oldest sister, Janet, is twenty-three. She has dark red hair and very blue eyes and the kind of figure that rates admiring whistles on street corners, although she is married to Jimmy Clark, a construction engineer. Also she is the mother of Toots, a bundle of fiendish energy aged three, whose real name is James Kennicott Clark, although no one has had the heart to tell him so yet.

Next comes my sister Alicia, who is twenty and beautiful, if you care for blondes. She is the ethereal type and her eyes are as blue as Janet's and her hair is palest ash-blond and she is always giving it lemon rinses to keep it that way. I don't suppose you can blame her, since it does enhance her fair skin and the sort of angelic look she cultivates. Although she isn't really angelic.

On the contrary, Alicia can be very difficult, and who should know better than I, who have had to put up with her all my life? She has just recently got engaged to Adam Wentworth, who is studying to be a doctor and is the son of Mr. Wentworth who owns the largest department store in town and is quite wealthy, if a teensy bit eccentric.

One of Alicia's worst troubles is, she hasn't a smidgin of a sense of humor, although how this can be true of one of my father's daughters is difficult to see. But Adam doesn't seem to mind, so I guess when you fall in love a sense of humor isn't one of the important factors.

I come next and I am older than my sixteen years in lots of ways, I think. I am not so blond as Alicia, nor so red-headed as Janet, but halfway in between. My eyes are brown like my mother's, and so well with my coppery hair. There are a few freckles on my nose, but they are not noticeable at all when I use pancake make-up. Besides, look at all the movie stars with freckles.

Also, I have quite a young sister named Marjorie, but invariably called Midge. She has lots more freckles than I, sandy hair that she wears in pigtails, and skinny legs. She may improve, though, as she gets older. Right now she is only eight.

We live in an average-sized town called Edgewood. Our house is big and comfortable and we have a big yard with lots of trees and bushes. In the summer the breeze smells good coming through the windows, what with lilac and flowering currant and mock orange all round.

I wish it were summer right now, not only on account of the fragrance, but because in the summer we can sort of overflow on to the porch and the sleeping porch upstairs and it makes the house seem even more roomy.

ALL this winter we've been a little crowded, due to the fact that Janet and Toots have been staying with us. One trouble with marrying a construction engineer is that he is always being sent to the oddest places. And, with a child as young as Toots, you have to think about the climate and the water and milk supply. So when Janet's husband Jimmy had gone to a remote section of Central America a few months back, Mother and Dad insisted that Janet and Toots come home and stay with us.

I wasn't at all averse to the idea. I thought it would be fun to have Janet home again, after four years. But I hadn't taken into consideration how marriage changes a person—and not always for the better.

Janet used to be a lot of fun, gay and full of screwy ideas. She was still like that when she and Toots first arrived. But before long she began to get all morose over being separated from Jimmy so long. And lately all she does is mope round and write long letters to her husband, pouring out her loneliness for him, I suppose. And when she isn't writing him, she is worrying about him.

It is all very trying and I cannot for the life of me see why she worries over Jimmy, who is a large rugged type, obviously well equipped to take care of himself. But it does no good to tell Janet that.

A few weeks ago she saw a movie called "Tropic Love," which was all about a beautiful brunette native girl and the disintegrating influence she and the tropics had on an American engineer who was building a dam in her country. She died in the end and it was all very sad and beautiful, but Janet has been worse than ever since then. She threatens to leave Toots with us and go down and join Jimmy and see what is actually happening, although his letters always sound as though he hasn't disintegrated in the least and is still crazy about Janet.

All of us, however, have tried to dissuade her from taking such a drastic step. If you knew Toots, you wouldn't blame us. We all love him to death, but he takes considerable coping with. And Dad, particularly, feels that Janet, who is young and resilient, is the one to do the coping. Besides, Jimmy isn't sure how long he'll have to stay in Central America and he is pulling strings to get sent back to the States. So, all in all, it seems much wiser for Janet and Toots to just sit tight where they are.

Another thing that made our house seem filled to overflowing the last few days was the fact that Adam Wentworth was home from college for the Christmas holidays. And while he wasn't actually living with us, he spent a lot of time at our house.

One never knew, in going about home on one's own business, when one would come upon him and Alicia. And they were always kissing. Now I, personally, have nothing against this form of amusement, particularly for engaged couples. Still I should think they might want to do something else for a change now and then.

Having Janet at home and Adam around all the time certainly doesn't make life any easier for me. It is very difficult to maintain any glamor whatever in a family with so many women around, especially sisters who are likely to say anything.

One night shortly before Christmas, when I used a picture in a movie magazine as a model and very conservatively applied a little bit of make-up, you should have heard what happened!

When I came downstairs where Brose Gilman was waiting to take me to the movies, Midge began to hoot in a very raucous tone. Alicia tore her attention away from Adam long enough to throw a glance of mingled amusement and horror towards me. And Janet said right in front of Brose and everybody, "Mother, look at Tobey! She's got lipstick all the way down to her chin."

She frowned then and stared at me more closely. "And isn't that a darker shade than you usually wear?"

"If it is," I said haughtily, "it's because that pale pink stuff Mother approves of is perfectly babyish!"

Dad spoke mildly. "You did go a little heavy on it, honey."

Mother nodded. "Yes, you did, dear. And do stop slumping. You'll have a curvature of the spine."

I straightened a little, feeling embarrassment seep through me. Brose

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hadn't said a word, he hadn't had a chance.

Janet was still staring at me suspiciously. She said, "Tobey Heydon, that looks like my lipstick. And if it is—" She got right up and started upstairs towards her room to see.

My heart began to pound.

Mother said, "You'll have to wipe some off, dear. It looks dreadful."

Midge demanded, "What are you acting so scared for, Tobey? Is it Janet's lipstick?"

I looked at Brose, who had been standing by the couch, taking in the whole humiliating scene. His eyes were very understanding and he raised his eyebrows in a questioning way, indicating that I had only to speak and he'd do whatever I wanted.

I said hastily, "Okay, I'll wipe some off," and I scrubbed at my mouth with my handkerchief. There was no time to lose. Upstairs I could hear Janet rummaging. "C'mon, Brose, we want to make the first show, don't we?"

He didn't hesitate a second. "Sure we do."

Calling good-byes over our shoulders we exited hurriedly. In the hall Brose shrugged into his coat and helped me with mine and I grabbed up my bunny fur mittens and earmuffs. Just as the front door slammed behind us I heard Janet calling my name from upstairs, but naturally we didn't wait.

Brose is really wonderful. I wouldn't admit this publicly, because it doesn't pay to let your true opinion of a man get around. Either it goes to his head, or some of your girl-friends decide to try to take him away from you if he's so terrific. But I am pretty crazy about Brose. He is quite tall and he has brown hair with a little curl in it which he is always trying to discourage by the most drastic methods. Moreover, he is strong and silent, like most of my favorite movie actors. He has great insight, too, and had taken in at once the whole situation we were leaving behind us.

So we ran down the front steps fast, hand in hand. Luckily Brose had persuaded his father to let him use the car, so we hopped in and he drove away quickly.

When we were safe around the corner, I had Brose stop the car under the first street light so I could fix my mouth again with Janet's lipstick.

Brose said softly, "Don't let 'em get you down, Tobey. I think you look wonderful."

"Do you, Brose?" I smiled at him.

"Sure. You always look swell, Tobey. I think maybe that's what's eating your sister."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, maybe she's jealous because you look so much prettier than she does with her lipstick on."

"Oh, Brose!" I felt all nice and warm inside. "You're just saying that. Janet's much better looking than I am."

"Oh, no, she isn't."

Brose reached over and squeezed my hand, then we drove on in silence.

I sometimes think the reason Brose is so sympathetic and understanding is because he, too, has suffered. His name is Ambrose, really, but everyone except his mother calls him merely Brose and he has done it all himself! Ever since he was a child he has been administering black eyes, although in many cases intimidation was all that was necessary.

But anyway, those things leave their mark on a man's inner nature and while he is bigger for them, the suffering has made him kind and tolerant, too.

The movie we saw was wonderful and so sad. I adore sad pictures but Brose doesn't. However, there was a Donald Duck too so we both enjoyed ourselves.

Afterwards we stopped in at Joe's Grill for a barbecue. Brose had just got his allowance, so the sky was the limit. We each had a barbecue and a malted. Sometimes when Brose is in straitened financial circumstances we just order one malted and use two straws. But I don't mind. I am not at all the mercenary type and have never liked a man according to how much he could do for me in the way of entertainment.

Besides wonderful food, Joe's Grill has a juke box with the newest records in town, so naturally there is always a mob of people we know there. After Brose and I had been there a little while I noticed Adam and Alicia dancing way over in the corner, but they didn't see us, at least I didn't think so.

Maybe they just pretended not to so Adam wouldn't have to dance with me, although as far as I, personally, am concerned, he is doing me a favor not to, because I think most older men are terrible dancers and Adam is certainly no exception.

They left before we did and I guess Alicia did see me because when Brose and I got home Janet came out of the library with a pen in her hand (she had obviously been writing to Jimmy) and fire in her eye.

She said, "It was my lipstick! Alicia saw you running around with your mouth all over your face. Give it to me this minute!"

I GAVE the lipstick silently to Janet and Brose squeezed my elbow in admiration for such patient forbearance and Janet went back into the library with her lipstick. It was still quite early, not yet ten, so Brose and I thought we would find some private spot and talk a while. Although hoping to find a private spot in our home is really nothing more than wishful thinking.

Since Janet was using the library, we looked into the living-room. The fireplace was very inviting with its blazing logs and cheerfully crackling flames, but Alicia and Adam were sitting on a sofa pulled up to face the hearth. Although we had scarcely made a sound, Alicia said, without taking her eyes from Adam, "Go away, you two. We got here first."

Next we tried the dining-room, but Mother and Dad were wrapping gifts in there. The dining table was stacked with intriguing boxes and there was a drift of holly paper and silver ribbon everywhere.

When Mother saw us hovering in the doorway she gasped and hastily pulled some paper over as many of the boxes as she could cover up. "Oh, Brose—Tobey! You mustn't come in here. Henry — that one! Cover it up."

"We weren't peeking, honestly," I told her.

Dad, who had put the paper on top of a box that just might contain the taffeta housecoat I'd been hinting for, exclaimed jovially, "You'd better not peek! Santa Claus won't come."

Brose laughed dutifully. "You mean Tobey still believes in him, Mr. Heydon?"

"All my daughters do—my wife, too, for that matter. They must, judging by the things they want for Christmas. They know I can't afford them."

"Go on away," Mother told us. "I simply have to get these things wrapped tonight. In the daytime, with Tots and Midge around, it's just impossible."

"Okay," I said. "We're going. C'mon, Brose."

As we went back into the hall, I sighed, "Such a house."

"It is kind of full of people."

We went on out to the breakfast-nook and by some strange circumstance there was nobody there. So I got out the remainder of the devil's-food cake we'd had for dinner and a glass of milk apiece and half a jar of olives.

We sat down and Brose leaned across the table with his eyes very intense and said, "Tobey, will you tell me the truth about something?"

"Why, of course, Brose."

My heart felt a little jumpy with excitement, because you have to admit that is a sort of intriguing question for a man to ask. And Brose was so serious.

He went on, still staring at me in that searching way that would brook no subterfuge, "Are you going to like the standard poets bound in leather for Christmas?"

I guess my face sort of fell because he continued at once in a very disgusted tone, "I knew it! But you can't argue with my mother. She doesn't seem to realise that times have changed since she was a girl."

I said politely, but I'm afraid not very enthusiastically, "Why, anything you care to give me would be lovely, Brose."

I didn't fool him for a minute. "It would not! Besides, it isn't even what I want to give you. But my mother thinks a book of poems is the very nicest thing for a boy to give a girl."

I could just hear his mother saying that. I giggled.

Brose laughed, too, and reached out to help himself to several more olives. Then he sobered.

"She's already bought it for me to give you. But you look around carefully in the package," he confided darkly, "and you'll find something else. Something I picked out personally. I've still got some of my Christmas money left and now that I know how you feel about the poets—"

He broke off at the sound of footsteps approaching. Alicia and Adam wandered into the kitchen, their arms around each other's waists.

Alicia widened her eyes at sight of us, although I had a hunch she was only pretending to be surprised. She said, "Why, Tobey! You know you're supposed to be in bed by ten-thirty. And you're pretty young to be up so late, too, Brose. You'd better break it up before Mother finishes her package wrapping and discovers you're still around."

• It is too simply degrading to be spoken to in that superior manner before the man you admire and to have the man you admire spoken to in that manner, too. But I hate vulgar brawls and I know Brose does, too. So both of us simply ignored her. We got up and I put our empty glasses and stuff on the sink and we left the room in complete dignity.

I heard Alicia starting to open the refrigerator and I was glad we had eaten all the olives and left only a little squiggly piece of cake.

Brose said unhappily in the hall, "I suppose I'd better get going."

But I shook my head. "Don't give her the satisfaction."

Brose looked much happier at once. "Okay, I won't."

So we sat down on the hall stairs because from that vantage point we could hear anyone approaching from either the kitchen or the dining-room and Brose could grab his coat and leave by the front door and I could run upstairs with no any further scoldings from anybody.

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Brose said in a brooding sort of tone, "I think they're terrible to you, Tobey. Both your sisters."

"Oh, well," I moved my shoulders in a philosophical little shrug. "I guess sisters always get in each other's hair."

Brose is an only child, so he doesn't understand very well how it is with families. "But they pick on you so," he objected, "first Janet and then Alicia."

"They aren't always such blights," I told him. "Often they treat me quite decently. Alicia let me wear her velvet evening coat to the Junior Prom. And Janet pays me regular baby-sitter rates whenever I take care of Toots for her."

"You defend them," Brose said wonderingly. "You have a very noble nature, Tobey. I admire you for it. But—things won't always be this way for you. When I get older—"

He left it at that, sort of hanging in mid-air. But it was a very thrilling speech just the same.

He went on in a disgusted tone, "And that Adam Wentworth, standing there looking smug while Alicia called you down. You'd think he'd tell her where to get off."

"Tell Alicia where to get off?" I laughed hollowly. "He wouldn't dare."

"No, I don't s'pose so," Brose agreed. "And yet he thinks he's so much. He gives me a pain. The old Santa Claus—"

I stared at Brose blankly. The last part of his remark didn't make sense. "Santa Claus?" I repeated.

Brose grinned. "Don't you know about that?"

I shook my head.

"You mean he hasn't even told Alicia?" Brose chuckled. "Not that I blame him."

He went on to explain. Brose knew the details because his father is a buyer for Wentworth's Department Store and he had told them about it at home. The old man who played Santa Claus in the toy department had come down with tonsillitis a few days before. And Mr. Wentworth, who is rather mean and suffers unreasonably over the amount of money Adam's medical education is costing him, had a brilliant idea. He decided that his son might as well help out, while he was at home for the Christmas holidays.

So Adam had been secretly spending his days at the store, wearing a red velvet suit and long white whiskers and a pillow from the bedding department stuffed in front to give him the proper figure. I remembered noticing that he hadn't been around so much lately except in the evenings. But in my wildest flight of fancy, I should never have suspected how he was occupying his time.

We sat there on the stairs when Brose had finished his recital, both of us rocking with laughter. But then I heard Mother and Dad emerging from the dining-room, so I gave Brose a warning push and he got up and hastily started getting into his overcoat.

"Why, darling, I thought—" Mother began and stopped. At least she was more tactful about telling me it was bedtime than Alicia had been.

"I'm just going, Mrs. Heydon," Brose said. "We got to talking and—well—the time just sort of—passed."

He smiled, a rather uncertain smile, and both Mother and Dad smiled back at him.

"Time," Dad said expansively, "practically always does."

"Doesn't it!" Brose agreed politely. "Well—good-night, Mrs. Heydon—Mr. Heydon."

Mother and Dad said good-night and I walked to the door with Brose. "I had a lovely time," I told him.

"So did I," Brose said. "G'night, Tobey. Be seeing you."

When the door had shut behind him, Mother said, "Such a nice boy."

She is really awfully sweet. I went over and put my arm around her and hugged her hard.

Dad yawned. "I'm exhausted," he said, rather as though the fact surprised him. "Wrapping all those packages, I suppose."

"No doubt, dear," Mother agreed, giving me a knowing, woman-to-woman look. She sighed, "I love Christmas, but I'll be almost glad when it's over. The cupboards are getting dreadfully full. And there are still a million things I have to do."

"Well, it won't be long now," Dad said. He put his arm through hers and they started up the stairs.

"You must get to bed, too, Tobey," Mother said across her shoulder. "It's late."

"In just a sec.," I promised.

I couldn't resist the temptation to go and stick my head into the kitchen and hiss, "Good-night, Alicia — and Santa Claus."

Adam's back was towards me, but his neck got quite crimson, so I knew he had heard. And Alicia had caught my words, too, because as I turned away and scooted fast up the stairs, I heard her say, "Santa Claus? What on earth is she talking about, Adam?"

I didn't wait to hear his answer, although I was tempted to.

. . . . .

Alicia was quite cool to me at breakfast. She looks ghastly in the morning, being so pale and washed-out without her make-up, whereas both Janet and I have more color and can sparkle as effectively at the breakfast table as any other place.

Janet was trying to persuade Toots to eat his cereal instead of dropping it by spoonfuls into his orange juice, and Dad was reading the paper, and Midge was eating toast and licking the jam off it, which is only one of her disgusting habits.

Mother is always kept very busy, making more toast and filling coffee cups and frying Dad's bacon and eggs just right. So she wasn't paying too much attention when Alicia addressed me frigidly.

"Tobey, when are you going to grow up and stop dressing like an absolute goon?"

I LOOKED down at myself in surprise and then up questioningly at Alicia. I was very conservatively garbed in jeans and shirt with my hair tied with a ribbon on top of my head, so I knew Alicia was simply trying to pick a fight.

"What's your trouble?" I inquired reasonably.

Alicia glared at me. "I suppose you thought that was very funny — about Santa Claus."

I said nothing whatever, merely smiling inscrutably, which I know infuriates Alicia.

She went on, "Just because the regular Santa Claus developed a sore throat and Adam's father insisted that he dress up—"

Mother and Janet both said, "Shhh," very loudly, and Midge and Toots looked up interestedly and then all of a sudden Toot's face puckered and he began to cry.

After much comforting and questions it turned out that he was crying because he thought if Santa Claus was sick with a sore throat he might not recover in time to bring the electric train which is all Toots has been talking or thinking about for some time. I think my father is looking forward to it, too.

Midge spoke conversationally through a mouthful of cereal, "Lots of the kids at school think there isn't any Santa Claus."

This was a low blow on her part with Toots present. Mother exclaimed aghast, "Why, Midge, darling, haven't you written him a letter every single year? And hasn't he always brought you just what you wanted?"

Even Dad, who usually prefers to ignore his family at breakfast, stuck his head around the edge of his paper to eye Toots anxiously and put in, "Besides, that sore throat absolutely proves he's a real person. Hope he takes good care of himself, so he'll be better by Christmas Eve."

Midge pretended to consider the matter judicially and Toots kept his eyes fixed unwaveringly on her face, as though he decided to let his attitude be governed entirely by hers. Midge's jaws moved rhythmically as she chewed her toast and we all waited. The suspense was terrible. Finally she spoke.

"Well — I guess there's a Santa Claus, all right. I hope he brings me some ice skates. D'you s'pose he might?"

My mother said weakly, "Ice skates?" Midge had decided she wanted no less than ten different things during the past few weeks. "Well—he—he certainly won't bring them unless you believe he will. Why should he?"

Midge said craftily, "I'll b'lieve he will then," and went back to eating her toast.

Toots said, beaming angelically around the table, "I b'lieve in him, too."

Janet proceeded to get the greater part of Toot's cereal down him. Then she and Mother encased him and Midge in their ski-suits and boots and mittens and sent them out to play in the snow. At least we were able to talk and eat in peace.

My mother said, "Now what is all this about Adam and Santa Claus, Alicia? It was very thoughtless of you to speak as you did with Toots here."

"Well, I'm sorry," Alicia said. "I didn't think. But she makes me tired, and Adam didn't like it a bit."

She was glaring at me, so they all knew just who she meant.

Dad looked from Alicia to me over the top of his paper. "What's Tobey done now?"

Alicia proceeded to tell them all about it, "Just trying to embarrass Adam," she accused. "As if it were some sort of disgrace for him to play Santa Claus — and anyway, it's his father's doing. Mr. Wentworth simply insisted. And I think it's sweet of Adam," she finished, giving me a definitely dirty look.

I said pleasantly, "I think so, too. I can just see him with the lovely, darling, curly whiskers and the pillow in his tummy."

Janet grinned. "Why don't you have him come over Christmas Eve in costume and dispel any question our doubting Thomas might have implanted? It would thrill Toots to death."

My mother said raptly, her eyes shining with excitement. "Oh, Alicia, do you think he would? It would be such a treat for Toots. We'd have the tree all lit and Adam could come in by the window. Do you suppose you could persuade Adam, Alicia?"

My sister seemed confident she could persuade Adam to do anything, up to arson or murder, so she promised to speak to him about it that very night. She tossed a gloating look in my direction and I knew she felt she had put me in my place, because no one else seemed to think it ridiculous for Adam to play Santa Claus.

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Alicia proved to be right in her estimation of her persuasive powers with Adam. Although he demurred strenuously at first and they argued about it all one evening, it was eventually settled that Adam would come in by the window and do his Santa Claus act for the children on Christmas Eve.

The last few days before Christmas are always pretty hectic at our house. This year they were especially so, since Midge was consumed with curiosity as to what she was going to get, and troubled by few if any scruples about trying to find out. This necessitated our doing all wrapping and storing of gifts in the darkest secrecy, which meant after Toots and Midge had retired for the night.

But eventually Christmas Eve arrived. We were all pretty thrilled because no matter how blase a person is normally, Christmas has a way of getting you just the same. This was especially true in my case, because I was naturally popping with curiosity over what else would be hidden in my package from Brose.

Then, too, I had done considerable hinting for a new formal and a taffeta housecoat and a sweater with socks to match. And while I was hopeful, a girl can never be absolutely sure of anything, until she is throwing away the holly paper and tinsel ribbon after the gifts are unwrapped.

My mother is more reasonable than Mrs. Gilman, or maybe it is the mellowing influence of four daughters; anyway, she had allowed me to use my own judgment about a gift for Brose. I selected a perfectly wonderful fountain pen that will write in places where no normal person would think of writing.

But Brose can use it at school and also later on when he goes away to college. When that time comes, the pen will serve to remind him of me, which will be a good thing, as I am counting on his asking me to all the dances and football games.

Dinner on Christmas Eve is practically a waste of good food in our house. No one ate much except Mother and Dad, who, I suppose, are too old to get very excited. Alicia was all jittery and could scarcely wait, because Adam was due via the window at seven-thirty.

I could see Janet had been crying and I suppose it is sad to be away from the one you love at Christmas, especially after seeing a movie like "Tropic Love." Jimmy hadn't even written her for several days. So no wonder she was feeling low.

But Toots and Midge were perfectly radiant and practically giving off sparks with joy. They scarcely touched their food, ignoring even dessert, which was ice cream.

Midge was in on the secret about Adam, but Toots had merely been told that if he was very, very good, it was just possible that Santa might come before bedtime.

Alicia had given Adam all sorts of instructions about being prompt, and the ladder had been placed under the library window since five o'clock and all our presents were in a big bag made out of old red curtains and hidden in the hall cupboard where Adam could get them easily. Brose couldn't come over till a little later, since Adam had absolutely put his foot down and announced that if anyone other than the family was going to be there he, for one, would not!

When dinner was over, the children played around half-heartedly, their eyes absolutely glazed with expectancy, while we women got the dishes out of the way in a hurry. It's a wonder the poor clock didn't stop out of sheer contrariness, the way we all kept watching it and trying to push its hands ahead with our thoughts.

At seven-fifteen we adjourned to the library. There was a big fire blazing in the fireplace and all the lights were turned out except the bright colored bulbs on the tree. It was a big tree—Dad always saw to that.

Every year Mother suggests, "Couldn't we have a sort of medium-sized tree this year, darling?" And every year Dad agrees, "Yes, size isn't important." And then he goes out and buys such a big one we always have to cut a couple of feet off the top to get it into the room.

It looked lovely, though, with all the ornaments, some old and some new, and the ropes of tinsel and the silver icicles dripping down.

Midge and Toots hadn't seen it yet and their eyes got bigger than ever when they came into the room. They stood there, staring up at the tree, holding each other's hands. Even I had to admit that it was awfully exciting and sort of moving.

THERE with such an ache in my throat that I could scarcely join in with the others when Mother started them off singing "Holy Night" and "Little Town of Bethlehem." Midge and Toots were absolutely thrilled silent, which was something new for them.

And then there came a soft, mysterious tapping on the window and the children jumped and I felt a little startled, because although I knew all the inner workings of the plan, it was certainly most effectively carried out.

Mother exclaimed, "Why—that must be Santa now!"

Dad went over and opened the window and Santa came in. I have to admit in all fairness that Adam made a very creditable figure in red velvet and curly white whiskers. Alicia had sneaked out into the hall when he was getting the bag of presents and had rouged his cheeks and the end of his nose and straightened his tummy for him.

He looked like the real thing and if I had been ten years younger I could have believed, just as Toots obviously did, that he had just parked his sleigh and reindeer outside after zooming down from the North Pole.

Toots breathed, "Santa," over and over in an awed little voice. And Midge was getting a terrific kick out of being in on a secret with the grown-ups.

Adam spoke in a very gruff and Santa Clausish voice that no one could recognise as his own. He proceeded to distribute the gifts, saying, "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas," and playing his part with fine fervor. I really didn't think Adam had it in him.

Toots and Midge stood absolutely petrified, while Santa proceeded to stack their gifts in front of them. I think Midge actually forgot for a minute that he wasn't the real thing, or else she was simply so thrilled with Christmas she didn't care.

So then Adam went over to the window, beaming and saying, "Good-bye till next year. Be good. Merry Christmas."

Toots and Midge murmured, "Good-bye Santa," and began to eye their stacks of gifts curiously.

Adam opened the window and sat on the sill and, with a last hearty wave, prepared to depart. Everything had gone absolutely according to plan up till now, but at this point things started being modified in a very decided and unforeseen manner.

Santa swung his booted feet over the window sill on to the top of the ladder and suddenly the most peculiar expression broke over what was visible of his face between his whiskers and the furred edge of his peaked cap. And then he began frantically to wave his arms around in circles and with a muffled gasp of utter astonishment, he disappeared.

Fortunately Midge and Toots seemed to observe nothing amiss about the mode of Santa Claus' departure. They weren't paying any attention to him by that time, having fallen upon their gifts with whoops of delight. But all of us grown-ups stood absolutely dumbfounded for a moment. Then Alicia ran towards the window and the rest of us crowded after her. We were rewarded with a very surprising sight.

It took only a glance to see that Adam's abrupt disappearance had been due to the fact that the ladder had upset. And the ladder seemed to have upset because someone else had been occupying it at the moment of Adam's attempted departure. And now this someone was apparently all tangled up with Adam in the snow below.

Alicia, observing this, started to yell, and when Alicia puts her mind on it she can yell in a most upsetting manner. Whether her yelling confused Adam still more, or whether the fall had knocked his innate intelligence out of him along with his breath, or whether, as seems most likely, it is just that the basic instinct of the male moved him, under such circumstances, to start fighting, we will never know.

Anyway, that is what Adam started doing and this seemed to infuriate the person who was all tangled up with him and who had until now seemed fairly quiescent, and he started fighting, too.

This made Alicia scream still louder and now, as though there wasn't enough to bear without that, Janet suddenly started yelling, too. And I discovered to my intense surprise that Janet, who is usually a fairly controlled type of person, can yell even louder than Alicia.

All the noise seemed to galvanise my father into action. He sprinted for the front door. Mother went into action, too, but of a different nature. Midge and Toots, gradually becoming aware of the hullaballoo, were beginning to show signs of leaving their fascinating new toys and coming over to the window to investigate. But Mother persuaded them to help her gather up Toots' electric stream - liner and the three of them took it into the living-room to start setting it up, although what Mother doesn't know about putting an electric train together would fill several volumes. Once she got them in there, she turned the radio on so loudly it drowned out the noise my sisters were making.

Down below, the battle between Santa Claus and the mysterious stranger was in full sway, with snow flying in all directions and the stranger getting his mouth full of whiskers and Adam's pillow tummy falling out completely.

By this time Janet had begun to get faintly articulate and she pounded Alicia on the shoulder and shrieked, "Stop him, somebody! He'll kill him!"

Alicia wailed between belligerence and tears, "Who'll kill whom? Adam! Adam, can you hear me? Oh, my poor darling."

"Adam, stop it!" Janet yelled. "That's Jimmy." She entreated Alicia. "Can't you make him stop?"

Alicia was yelling, too. "You make Jimmy stop, why don't you?"

For a minute it looked as though Janet and Alicia would really get into the spirit of the thing and start still another fight. But just then there was a sound of wheels turning on to our drive and a squeal of brakes and a car

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with Edgewood Police printed on the side and someone hanging on the running board skidded to a halt.

By this time Dad had reached the scene of action and jumped into the middle of the melee, trying to pull the two furiously struggling figures apart. Now two policemen joined him and—my heart leaped!—none other than Brose, who had evidently been the figure hanging on to the running board.

Well, that was the beginning of the end. Between my father and Brose and the police it was just a matter of seconds till they got Adam and Jimmy pulled far enough apart so they could get a good look at each other.

So then Jimmy grinned through his cut lip and said, "Well, Santa Claus, as I live and breathe! I took you for a burglar."

"You took me for one?" Adam demanded, enraged still. "But that's what you are — sneaking up ladders — I could have broken my neck when I fell—"

"boys, boys," my father laid a paternal hand on the shoulder of each. "I don't believe you two have met. Adam, this is Jimmy Clark, Janet's husband. And, Jimmy, this is Adam Wentworth, Alicia's fiance."

Above the chorus of, "Darling, are you hurt badly?" and "Darling, how did you ever get here? I'll be right down," that Alicia and Janet were calling out the window, Brose's appalled voice was clearly audible.

"H-holy cow," he gulped, "then—m-maybe I shouldn't have gone for the police . . ."

Eventually it was all explained. Jimmy, who had arrived unannounced from Central America as a Christmas surprise for his family, had seen Adam's ladder standing under the window and thought it looked suspicious. So he put down his suitcase and climbed up the ladder stealthily hoping to trap the intruder.

And the next thing he knew, someone whom he took for an escaping house-breaker landed on top of him and the ladder upset with them both.

Adam, apparently, was too mad to think at all when he was catapulted unexpectedly to the ground. Their starting to fight had been, as I suspected, purely reflex action.

In the meantime, Brose, who had been coming over to our house to bring me my present, had started up our front path as Jimmy was sneaking stealthily over to climb the ladder and investigate. So, naturally, he had immediately thought Jimmy was a burglar and had sped to summon the police.

Fortunately, our Edgewood police force seems to have a sense of humor. The two men who had come to our assistance went off chuckling when Dad had given them each a handful of his Christmas cigars. Adam peeled out of his red velvet suit and whiskers and Alicia took him out into the kitchen to wash his face and he was practically as good as new in no time. Jimmy didn't seem any the worse for his experience, either. He and Janet promptly took over the sofa in the living-room.

Before long Mother herded Midge and Toots up to bed over their fervent protests, and they would only go when she permitted Toots to take his electric train to bed and Midge her ice skates. Dad, who had got a new casting rod from Mother, slipped into the library where he could practise with privacy.

So that left Brose and me no place but the stairs, but we are so used to sitting on them we didn't mind at all. We hadn't given each other our gifts yet and the suspense was just about killing me, but still there was something I wanted to say to him before we began opening our respective packages.

"Brose," I told him, "I think you were simply wonderful tonight—really, I do."

"I don't see why." He sounded kind of embarrassed. "I was pretty dopey going for the police, but I thought—"

"It wasn't dopey a bit," I interrupted firmly. "It was very quick thinking in an emergency. Nine times out of ten it would have been a burglar sneaking up a ladder that way and not just my sister's husband. This just happened to be the tenth time, that's all."

Brose looked a little less crestfallen. "Yeah, I guess so. At least, it's swell of you to figure that way, Tobey. I was afraid that you might be mad at me—or that your Dad might."

"He wasn't at all," I assured him. "And — I wasn't mad at you a speck. Brose, I admire you more than I can say."

"Gee, Tobey, do you really?" He picked up my hand and started playing with it. "T—" he sort of gulped and got a little red. "I admire you very much, too. In fact, I think you're wonderful."

"Thank you, Brose." I looked down demurely at the package he had given me. The ribbon was all crooked, with one end trailing longer than the other, and one of the seals had come unstuck, so I was sure Brose had wrapped my gift himself. I told him, "You look at your gift first. Go on, open it."

"Well, if you want me to." He undid the package and was very thrilled over his pen.

Then I began unwrapping my parcel. Sure enough, there were the poets bound in leather, just as Brose had warned me. But underneath, wrapped separately in tissue paper, were two other little packages. I opened them, my heart palpitating.

Brose is too, too sweet! Guess what else he gave me besides the poets? A bottle of My Sin perfume and a lipstick which is a much darker shade than Janet's, and she can keep hers after this for all I care.

"Oh, Brose," I said softly. I couldn't seem to say anything else, just that. "Oh, Brose . . ."

He took both my hands in his and leaned quite close to me, there on the stairs. And it seemed like the least I could do under the circumstances was to give him a little kiss. It was the first time I had done so. But I had always suspected Brose would be nice to kiss. And he was.

I SIMPLY love holiday week. It is always filled with such wonderful excitement, building up thrillingly to the climax of New Year's Eve. And this year it all seemed more marvelous than ever before. There was something doing every minute, sleigh rides, dances, skating parties on Lake Ellen, with refreshments afterwards at someone's house.

Brose and I were in on the whole merry whirl that involved our particular crowd. Alicia and Adam and Janet and Jimmy took part in the doings of all their friends. Midge's crowd of young fry were active in their own childish way. And even Mother and Dad seemed to be kept pretty much on the go with their more staid amusements.

Then on New Year's Eve we had a big party at our house. Dad had rolled up the library rug, so we used that room exclusively for dancing. Some of the older couples played cards in the living-room. Lots of people just drifted around from one room to another. There was so much talk and laughter it was almost deafening.

Towards morning we all had bacon and scrambled eggs and coffee and doughnuts, and that sort of wound things up. People began going home after that and everyone said they had had a simply terrific time. Barbie Walters, who is my very dearest friend and on whom I can always depend to tell me the absolutely unvarnished truth, said it was the most perfectly wonderful party she had ever attended. So I guess it was a success all right.

. . . . . .

I don't know why it is that parties are always so hard on older people. We all slept late the next morning, except Janet, who had to get up at the crack of dawn with Toots as usual. I felt perfectly wonderful and ready for anything at breakfast. But even with all that sleep, Mother and Dad looked sort of wan and weary.

"I have always felt," Dad said, toying with his waffle in a way not at all like himself, "that it would be a great improvement if there was a holiday called Day-For-Getting-Over-New-Year's-Eve. It could be sandwiched in between New Year's Eve and New Year's Day with very little trouble."

It was much calmer than usual around the table. Midge and Toots were out playing, Janet and Jimmy seemed sort of quiet and preoccupied, and even Alicia and I hadn't had a word of disagreement since we sat down to our meal. Secretly, I had made a New Year's resolution to try to get along a little better with Alicia. Maybe she had some such idea, too.

Mother said faintly, "It wouldn't be so bad if only people wouldn't always have Open Houses on New Year's Day. We're supposed to put in an appearance at five at least—" she broke off, frowning. "I think it was just five invitations I definitely accepted."

"The appearance I put in," Dad said in a sort of low moan, "will not be my best, I assure you. At the moment I do not feel equal to looking even one drink in the eye, let alone five."

Mother said, "Oh, dear," as though she hadn't thought of the drinks that went with the Open Houses till that minute.

After that, conversation lagged. Alicia seemed to be thinking of Adam, at least she had that limpid-eyed, dreamy sort of expression. Maybe I had it, too, because I was certainly thinking of Brose.

Suddenly Janet's voice broke into my pleasant abstraction. She sounded all sort of keyed up and tense. "Jimmy, I'm simply going to have to ask them! I can't stand it another minute!"

Jimmy said seriously, "Are you sure it's what you want to do?"

All of us stared from one of them to the other a bit blankly. Janet nodded her head in a very positive manner, so that her dark red hair bobbed against the sides of her neck.

"I'm sure, darling. I want it more than anything in the world. And—I don't think Mother and Dad will mind dreadfully when they know how I feel about it."

Dad looked bewildered. "Would you mind telling us what you're talking about?" he asked her.

My mother, who is quite a remarkable woman in some ways, said calmly, smiling a little, "I know what she's talking about. You want to go back with Jimmy when he leaves on Wednesday, don't you, Janet? You want Toots to stay with us for a while."

"Oh, yes," Janet breathed, almost prayerfully. "That's exactly what I want to do. I simply can't stand it any longer having Jimmy thousands and thousands of miles away. And yet I know the climate down there would be awful for Toots—I simply couldn't

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take him. But Jimmy feels it would be too much of an imposition, dumping Toots on you—and I suppose it would, really—but, oh, Mother—" Her voice sort of broke.

"I know, dear," Mother soothed. "I know just how you feel."

Jimmy said uncomfortably, "I thought it would be better if we could be together, even for a little while—that's why I got this leave to come up, but—" His voice ran down.

"But it didn't help, did it?" Mother said to Janet gently. "You've been miserable and lonely for months. It was easy to see. And being with Jimmy again has made it worse instead of better. After you've had these few days together, you simply can't face the thought of his going away again and leaving you."

Janet nodded and her eyes got very bright, as though she might be going to cry. She said, "Oh, Mother—you're wonderful! You do understand."

"Of course I understand. And so does your father. Don't you, Henry?"

Dad looked a little dazed. "Well, yes—I understand, all right. But, Laura—" he looked very straight at my mother, "are you sure?"

"Of course I'm sure," Mother told him. She addressed Janet and Jimmy then, "You two should be together. It's only right and natural. And since Jimmy's job happens to be in a place that wouldn't be good for Toots, we'll be very happy to keep him for you. And it won't be any imposition, either, . . . you just get such a thought right out of your minds."

"Oh, Mother—Dad—" Jimmy said sort of huskily, "you're swell, both of you. I'm luckier than I deserve, marrying into a family like yours."

"The family," Dad said, "is a wonderful institution. Families should stand together, help each other out, be there to depend on. I'd love to have Toots stay with us, so long as Laura doesn't feel it'll be too much for her. After all, she's not as—"

"Henry Heydon!" Mother exclaimed warningly. "Don't you dare say I'm not so young as I was! Besides, if I could cope with four girls, one little boy won't be too much for me."

"True," Dad agreed. "And look at all the help you'll have—Alicia and Tobey, even Midge."

"Sure," I said, feeling a little dazzled by the way Janet and Jimmy were looking at each other.

I guess Alicia must have been thrilled by that look, too, because she said, "Of course, we'll help. We'll be glad to."

Mother smiled at us. "If four able-bodied females and one doting grandfather can't take care of Toots, it'll be just too bad."

Jimmy told us all, "It won't be for any longer than I can help, I promise you. I expect to be sent out to California in a couple of months and we'll certainly want Toots with us then."

Janet said, "You're all being so perfectly wonderful about it I could just cry."

"You haven't time," Mother told her sensibly. "You have a thousand things to do—packing, and tomorrow you'll have to shop for some summer clothes. It's hot where you're going and Wednesday's only two days off."

"Golly!" Janet exclaimed, wide-eyed, starting to push back her chair. "That's right!"

"I think," Dad told her dryly, "you'll have time to finish your breakfast."

After all that excitement at breakfast, I expected the rest of New Year's Day would turn out to be pretty calm. But I was mistaken. The most wonderful and exciting thing of all happened that afternoon when Brose and I went for a long walk.

It was a lovely day, fairly cold but clear and bright, so that the sky looked impossibly blue and the snow impossibly white, and all the trees and houses and things had a clear-cut sort of look, as though they had been cut out and pasted on. It was like walking through a Christmas card scene instead of a real one.

Brose had on a leather jacket and brown corduroy pants and his red earmuffs and big flapping goloshes. I wore my green gabardine ski-suit and my bunny-fur earmuffs and mittens and my lambskin-lined boots. So we were both snug and warm and felt like walking forever. We went down the road that goes around the east edge of Lake Ellen, where a lot of people were skating.

AFTER a while we left the lake shore, and before long we were out in the country. There was an old-fashioned rail fence sticking up through the snow, and we floundered through a deep rift in order to sit on it and rest for a while before starting back towards town.

I had told Brose all about Janet and Jimmy and about our going to keep Toots for them. We had talked about ever so many things as we walked, but now, sitting close together on the old rail fence, our conversation seemed to have sort of run down. Not that we minded. We are not the sort of friends who have to talk and talk in order to keep from being bored. I think there is a deeper kind of understanding between us than many people have, even older people than we are.

Somewhere far off a train whistle cried, and it was such a lonely sound I felt sorry for it. Just hearing it made me feel a little lonely, too, till Brose reached out and pulled off one of my mittens and held my hand close and warm in his. Then I felt wonderful.

Brose said, "Tobey."

"Yes?"

"I—well, I don't quite know how to say this. I guess I never felt like saying it to any girl before—but—well, I like you an awful lot."

My heart beat so fast it felt smothery. "I like you very much, too, Brose."

"Better than any other boy?"

I thought about it for a minute, although it really didn't need much thinking about. But I wanted to be honest, perfectly honest. "Better than any boy I've ever met."

Brose let out his breath in a sort of relieved way. "That's just how I feel about you," he told me.

"I'm glad."

We sat there for quite a while then, not saying anything.

When Brose spoke again his voice was all husky and his expression solemn. "Tobey, do you like me well enough to take a very serious step?"

My heart bumped hard. "What do you mean?"

"My class ring," Brose said hoarsely. "Would you wear my class ring, Tobey?"

I frowned. "But, Brose, you don't have it yet."

At Edgewood High you don't get your class ring till you're a Senior. And neither Brose nor I would be Seniors till next September.

"No, of course not," Brose said. "But will you wear it when I do get it?"

Nothing quite so wonderful had ever happened to me in my whole life. I just sat there, looking up at him.

"Will you, Tobey?" Brose insisted solemnly.

"Well—yes, I think so, Brose—only—just what does it mean to wear a boy's class ring? It isn't being really engaged, is it?"

"Not exactly, I guess," Brose sounded a little doubtful, as though he wasn't too sure what it meant himself. "I guess we're a little young to get really engaged—but I like you so much—"

I nodded. I felt that way, too. I told him, "If wearing your ring will mean we're very best friends—and that I like going about with you more than any other boy I know, then I'd love to wear it, Brose."

His face lit up. "Gee, will you? That'll be swell."

A thought struck me — a terrible thought. "But—what if we both don't feel like this about each other when you get it? It's a long time."

"Oh, we will," Brose said confidently. "At least, I will. And I hope you will, too."

He sounded so terribly serious I couldn't help laughing. So then he laughed, too, and suddenly we both seemed to feel the same urge. We jumped down from the old rail fence and floundered through the snowdrift towards the road. I couldn't resist the temptation to make a big squashy snowball and throw it at Brose across my shoulder. So then he had to go a step further and wash my face with an icy cold handful of snow.

It was a perfectly wonderful New Year's Day.

. . . . . .

The next couple of days passed so fast it made us all sort of dizzy. Janet was in such a rush getting ready to fly south with Jimmy on Wednesday. There was shopping to do and packing, a hundred last-minute instructions about Toots' care and schedule, as if Mother didn't know as much about that as Janet did. But I guess the closer it got to time for her to actually leave her child, the more panic-stricken Janet became at the prospect.

Toots was by far the calmest person around our house. He wasn't at all concerned about his Mother leaving with his Daddy, as long as he was to stay with Grandma and Grandpa—and his new electric train. Children are such realists.

The night before she left, Janet came into my room when I was getting ready for bed. She looked sort of desperate.

"Tobey," she said, "the most awful thought just occurred to me. I don't know why I didn't think of it sooner. It's about Toots."

"What about Toots?" I didn't mean to sound callous, but really Janet had been in such a dither the past twenty-four hours I was beginning to lose patience. "After all, you have to make up your mind. Either you must trust Mother to take care of him or—"

"Oh, it's not that I don't trust her," Janet broke in. "I know she'll take wonderful care of him—only—well, it's just this. I'll be away off down there in the wilds of Central America, and I'll want to hear often how Toots is getting along. And you know how Mother is about writing letters," she finished in a sort of wail.

I got her point at once. My mother is a woman of sterling character and many worthy accomplishments, but letter-writing is not her long suit. For one thing, she is pretty busy, and she was going to be busier than ever with Toots to take care of.

"I see what you mean," I said thoughtfully. "Still, she could always send you a wire if anything of a drastic nature came up."

"Don't talk like that! Naturally, I'm not figuring on anything drastic happening. It's just that I'd feel so much easier in my mind if I could count on hearing from someone in the family, say, once a week." The way she looked at me when she said that put her idea over pretty clearly.

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"Huh-uh!" I said flatly. "You're not going to pin me down to any rash promise like that! I'm not too crazy about writing letters, either. Once a week—gosh!"

"Suppose there was money in it for you?" Janet regarded me narrowly. "You're always bewailing the fact you can't make your allowance stretch to cover your expenses."

"Money," I repeated, "for writing letters?"

It was an intriguing thought. And it is perfectly true that in this period of high prices, even for simple little pleasures like movies and double chocolate nut sundaes, an allowance the size of mine is, to say the least, inadequate.

But the last time I broached this subject to my father he gave me such a sad story of the way his income had failed to keep up with the rising cost of living and of how hard it was nowadays to support a large family that I ended up feeling maybe I ought to lend him money. Janet couldn't have hit upon a better way to catch my interest and ensure my co-operation.

She nodded, a little smile playing around her mouth, as though she remembered how it used to be when she was my age and practically always broke.

"I'm perfectly willing to pay you, say, a dollar a week, if I can count on you to write me a letter that often and let me know how Toots is getting along."

"A dollar a week!" I said brightly. "For that I'll promise to write you a nice long newsy letter once a week about your child."

"Good!" Janet beamed. She thrust her hand into her housecoat pocket and brought out two one-dollar bills. "Here's for a couple of weeks in advance. And you're sure I can count on you?"

"To the death," I assured her. I took the bills and then a sudden arresting thought occurred to me. "Uh—Janet."

"Yes?"

"You won't mention this arrangement to Mother, will you? She—well, she might think it was a little bit mercenary of me."

"I won't tell her." Janet gave me a little hug and went.

. . . . . .

Janet and Jimmy got off all right the next morning. Two days later their wire came saying they had arrived safely. I figured that was my cue to sit down and write Janet a long reassuring letter about Toots. I am nothing if not a woman of my word, but somehow it is rather hard to write to a person you have seen and talked with as recently as I had seen and talked with Janet.

There wasn't any fresh news. So I wrote her that Toots was fine, that we were all well, that it had snowed some more, that school would be starting in a few more days and that I was not looking forward to it. I told her I'd write in more detail next time and let it go at that. And then, because I was feeling a little guilty about the letter being only one page long, I walked down to the post office and sent it air-mail, just to ease my conscience.

Really, I admonished myself severely, I would have to do better than this, or I wouldn't be earning my dollar a week.

But, sure enough, by the time I owed Janet another letter quite a few things had happened for me to relate. I figured I should tell her all the news and not merely how Toots was getting along. Because, after all, she would no doubt be interested in hearing what was happening to the rest of the family, too. So I wrote her a long, detailed account of things in general, almost as long an account as I usually write in my diary.

The letter went as follows:

Dear Janet:

Just to relieve your mind at the very beginning, Toots is in excellent health and no more trouble than usual. After all, Mother says you can't expect too much of a boy of three when grown-up people who ought to have more sense act the way this family does. But you know how Mother talks. She doesn't really think we're so bad. Nevertheless, Janet, she has been pretty busy since you left, what with riding herd on Toots and getting Midge started back to school and one thing and another. So I doubt she's had time to write you even one letter. And isn't it a good thing you were foresighted enough to make this arrangement with me?

I am back in high school again, and it all seems dull and boring after all the fun that went on during the holidays. Not too dull and boring, of course, and I will probably get used to it again before long and not even remember what I'm missing. It must be wonderful, though, to be entirely grown-up like you and not have to go to school any more and I am surely looking forward to it.

Well, how do you like it down there where you are? Is it like that movie "Tropic Love" with lots of smouldering and dangerous native girls on the loose and all the American engineers disintegrating? I think myself that the disintegration must have been a little exaggerated, because when Jimmy was here Christmas, he seemed the same as ever, only more sunburned.

We are all well, only Alicia, and I don't mean she is sick, but Adam has gone back to college and I guess it is pretty hard on an engaged girl when she can't see her fiance very often. She has been sort of moping around like a lost soul ever since Adam left, but she has begun to pick up again the last day or so because tomorrow is Saturday and he is coming back to Edgewood for the week-end. And then next week his fraternity is giving its big winter dance, and Alicia's going up to the university for that.

I HAD to pause for a moment here to quell the surge of indignation that rose up in me. As soon as it had subsided I went on writing:

Alicia has an absolutely new formal for the occasion, Janet, and honestly, does it seem fair to you? Because that swish black net of hers is still perfectly good, while I haven't had a new formal since that ghastly old yellow rag I got for the Junior Prom and it is six months old if it is a day and I look like nothing human in it. And I am going to have to wear it for the Hi-Y dance to which Brose Gilman has invited me next week.

But, of course, Brose's is just a high-school club and I am just me, so when I broached the subject of a new dress to Mother in a perfectly reasonable way, she merely said, "Hush, darling. I can't ask Daddy to provide any more clothes for anybody till spring at the very earliest. If you'd heard what he said about Alicia's—"

I said, "I did hear—being in the house at the time."

So then Mother went on with that line about it being too soon after the holidays to incur any unnecessary expenses.

I couldn't help feeling a little hurt by her attitude, so I said with quiet dignity, "Alicia being the only one who isn't affected by all this economising?"

Mother didn't think it was very nice of me to talk so. She said, "Tobey, surely you're old enough to understand. Alicia is engaged to be married to Adam. Naturally, when she's going up to his college she wants to look her very best. Besides, your yellow dress is simply lovely on you, so sweet and girlish. And, after all, you've only worn it once."

How can older people, even mothers, be so absolutely lacking in understanding, Janet? I knew it would be a waste of time to continue the argument, so I accepted defeat gracefully. But I couldn't help thinking: Don't you suppose I want to look my best, as well as Alicia? And as for being engaged—well, I practically am too.

This is a secret, Janet, and you must not refer to it in any of your letters, because it would be murder if it were ever found out. But Brose and I practically almost are engaged. New Year's Day he asked me if I would wear his class ring next fall when he gets it. And I said I would, provided we both felt the same way about each other as we do now. And you know what a class ring means—not quite an engagement but the very next thing to it. And when I am with Brose I feel all sort of warm and quivery and unsettled inside, and if that isn't evidence of a very deep feeling I don't know what it is.

Anyway, to get back to my clothes problem I got one break. Brose's club dance falls on the same Saturday night as the fraternity dance at the university. And, of course, Alicia will only take along her new dress and I have a confident hunch that once she is safely gone for the week-end I can work on Mother and get her to let me wear Alicia's black net.

None of my friends have seen it, so it would be just as good as a new formal for me. I would ask Alicia herself to let me wear it, but you know how stingy she is about her clothes.

Well, I will close for this time, because I have just heard a loud scream from behind the garage where Midge and Toots are playing. Knowing my sister as I do, I suspect she has been up to something and Toots is probably the victim. I am supposed to be watching them while Mother does the marketing so I will go out and investigate now. I do not think it is serious, though, because Toots always yells louder when he is in a temper than when he is hurt. And he is yelling very loudly indeed right now.

With love,
TOBEY.

P.S.—I have already written up the two dollars worth you paid me in advance before you left. So please send along another payment for some more reports on Toots. He has already stopped crying, so you needn't worry about him a bit.

As ever,
TOBEY.

It was lucky I got that long letter about Toots off to Janet when I did, because things went very haywire around our house the next few days and I didn't have much time for writing. All in the space of one little week-end the whole shape of the future altered in a way that I for one found most disconcerting. Almost before I was able to grasp what was happening, the fraternity dance to which Alicia had planned to go with Adam was all off. Everything was all off!

Personally, I think Alicia is nuts to pick a time like that to have a big fight with her fiance. If a couple simply have to scrap they can pick another time than right before a big important date. But not Adam and Alicia! They have to be spectacular.

Adam came down from college on

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Saturday for the week-end, just as I had written Janet he intended to do. Alicia greeted him joyfully and everything was apparently lovely up to the time that Brose and I left for Barbie Walters' house Sunday night. She had Sox Trevor, her special heart-throb, over, too. The four of us had a super time and her mother gave us malted and chocolate cake for refreshments. And Brose and I walked home the long way round.

I said good-night to him at the door, because my parents are adamant about my getting to bed by ten-thirty when I have to go to school the next morning. When I had hung my things in the hall cupboard, I stuck my head into the living-room where they were listening to sentimental music on the radio and glancing through the tag-end of the Sunday paper.

Mother said approvingly, "I'm glad you got in early, dear. Alicia's home early, too. She went upstairs without even stopping to say good-night. I guess she was thinking about Adam."

"No doubt," I agreed. Still, it struck me as rather odd for Alicia to get home so early from a date with Adam.

I said good-night and proceeded to go upstairs. Scarcely had I reached the top when the sound of stormy sobbing from Alicia's room smote my ears. I suppose the only reason Mother and Dad hadn't heard her was because the radio was on. Naturally, I decided to investigate.

She was lying face down on her bed, crying into her pillow.

"Alicia." I sat down beside her and laid a comforting hand on her shoulder, "what's the matter?"

"Go away," she moaned in a muffled voice. "Leave me alone."

I was too curious about what had happened to give up so easily. "But what's wrong?"

"Everything," Alicia gulped. "Simply everything. Men are so awful. I hate every single one of them. Especially Adam," she wailed. And then she added, "Not that it's any of your business."

That's my sister, always about as confidential as a clam. I never did find out exactly what had happened, probably very little, since I have realised for a long time that it doesn't take much to precipitate a quarrel between Alicia and Adam. They can fight harder and make up with more enthusiasm than any couple I know.

Anyway, Alicia insisted that everything was over between them and that she never wanted to see him again—never, never! Of course, I knew this was a lot of hooey and that she would just naturally curl up her toes and die if she never saw him again. But I didn't say so. Instead, I consoled her to the best of my ability and got a cool damp cloth from the bathroom to wash her face.

I felt confident they would make up eventually. But I crossed my fingers mentally and hoped it would be before Saturday. Alicia would be crazy if she stayed mad at Adam long enough to miss that wonderful dance. Sometimes it seems to me that although she is several years my senior, she hasn't nearly as sound judgment as I have.

Anyway, it was important to me personally this time for her not to be too stubborn and stiff-necked about making up with Adam because of the black net formal. Knowing Alicia, I realised she could be just mean enough not to let me wear it, even if she wasn't using it herself. There is a little sadistic streak in my sister that makes her want to see everybody else suffer whenever she is unhappy.

I went to sleep that night with a good deal more than the test we were to have in Physics next day weighing on my mind . . .

Monday and Tuesday dragged past in the most utterly appalling fashion.

I got through my test by a very narrow margin, which wasn't surprising considering that Physics is not my best subject and that I had much more vital and important things to think about.

Walking home from school on Tuesday afternoon, even Brose, who is not always too observant, noticed that I was jittery and abstracted. He inquired sympathetically, "What's eating you?"

I am not one to confide my family's private affairs to outsiders, but Brose is such a close friend. So I told him about Alicia's bitter quarrel with Adam.

"This is news?" Brose inquired. "I thought those two were always having scraps and making up again and having more scraps."

"Well, they are," I admitted. "But this one is a dilly, even for them. It's two days now and Adam hasn't even telephoned."

"Oh, well," Brose shrugged, "they'll get over it. Anyway, since when have you taken to worrying over Alicia's love life?"

NATURALLY I didn't want to go into all the details about my yearning to wear the black formal. For one thing, I wanted to dazzle Brose with it, if I was lucky enough to get to wear it. And for another thing, with the present unsettled state of affairs, it looked as though I'd have to wear my old yellow dress after all, so there was no use building up his expectations.

Besides, men never seem to understand the importance of problems involving clothes, so I doubted whether he would be properly sympathetic.

So I merely said enigmatically, "Blood is thicker than water. After all, I don't like to see my own sister unhappy, even if I don't always get along so well with her myself." Then I guided the conversation into other channels and the rest of our walk home was taken up with a discussion of various inconsequential subjects.

When still another day passed with no phone call from Adam, I began to feel almost as low as Alicia. I toyed with the idea of suggesting that she telephone him, but I knew this would be a complete waste of breath, since Alicia was by this time as proud and stubborn about the whole business as she was mad.

On Wednesday night Mother and Dad decided to go to the movies, and I put Toots to bed soon after their departure. He is always pretty tired, having been going strong from practically the crack of dawn, when he arises. Midge went less willingly, but I had her settled without too much difficulty by eight o'clock.

Then I went downstairs to the library, where Alicia was curled up morosely on the davenport, listening to a mystery thriller on the radio. Or maybe she wasn't really listening to it, but at least she had it turned on. It sounded pretty good, too, so I flopped down in a comfortable chair and started to give it my full attention.

Just at the most interesting part there was a sound of car wheels on our drive, followed by the noise of a car door opening and slamming. Alicia jumped up and flew to the window, and then she sort of seemed to freeze up, although I could see that she was a little gratified, too.

She said dramatically, "It's Adam! Tobey, I won't see him. You must go to the door and tell him I have nothing whatever to say to him."

I answered, "Nuts!" which may have been inelegant, but it certainly expressed my feelings. Honestly, sometimes it seems to me Alicia hasn't the sense she was born with. "You can't treat him like that when he's driven all the way down from college to see you. Why, it's seventy-five miles each way! And he'll have to get back by midnight. You haven't any time to waste."

"I won't see him," she insisted, "after the way he's treated me."

"You haven't treated him very well, either," I argued. "Don't be a dope! Go and powder your nose, and I'll let him in for you."

But Alicia repeated, "No, I'm not going to see him."

She started puffing her hair out around her face though, which I took as an encouraging sign.

The door-bell rang then and Alicia just stood there, so I went to the door and there was Adam, looking so apologetic and miserable I really felt sorry for him, even if he does usually infuriate me by treating me like a child.

I said, quite loudly, because I knew Alicia would be listening, even though she had closed the library door behind me, "Oh, hello, Adam. This is a surprise!"

And Adam gulped and his eyes looked awfully unhappy, and he had always been so sort of nonchalant and superior with me before that it seemed terrible to see him so humbled. And he asked, "Is Alicia home, Tobey? I want to see her."

And I said, still aloud for Alicia's benefit, because an idea was beginning to form in my mind, due to a movie I had seen a while back, "Oh, she's home, Adam. But she won't see you. She has nothing to say to you."

Then I stood on my tiptoes so I could whisper in his ear, "Go on into the library and make her listen to you, whether she wants to or not! Don't be a worm. Treat her rough, Adam, and make her like it!"

He gasped and then his eyes brightened a little and he whispered back, "Do you—suppose she would?"

And I nodded hard, while I was saying aloud, "I'm sorry, Adam, but I'm afraid it's no use."

So then he started moving hesitantly towards the library. And I made a scuffling noise with my feet, as if he had shoved me masterfully out of his way, and I gave him a little push from behind, too, so he'd go in there more purposefully.

I heard Alicia gasp as the door swung open and then Adam said sort of chokingly, "Alicia—you've got to listen to me—"

They forgot to shut the door and while I wouldn't for a minute listen through a closed door, I don't really consider it eavesdropping to simply stand in the hall of one's own home, even if a supposed-to-be-private conversation is going on in an adjoining room.

So I just stood there and Alicia said, "I told you it was no use, Adam," very coolly and regally. "We said everything we had to say to each other Sunday night. You might as well have saved yourself the trouble of driving down."

I was scared for a minute that Adam was just going to take her high-handed treatment, as he had got in the habit of doing. But then I heard him cross the room towards her with what sounded like masterful strides. And I guess he must have grabbed Alicia and started kissing her. But he must not have done it so well as the hero of the movie, because Alicia, unlike the heroine, did not succumb to his caveman tactics at all.

I could hear what sounded like a struggle climaxed by a sharp slap.

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And then Alicia's voice, positively dripping icicles, said, "Adam Wentworth, don't you dare treat me like that! I won't stand for it, do you hear? You—you brute! Oh, I hate you!"

And then she came hurrying out of the room and up the stairs, throwing me a very dirty look indeed as she realised I must have heard everything. Then Adam rushed out, too, but not after Alicia. He gave me an even dirtier look than she had and I noticed that one of his cheeks was much redder than the other as he strode past me towards the front door.

However, I could not feel I was to blame for the way things had worked out. My advice had been given with the very best intentions. And when he slammed out of the house I felt desperate, because I knew from experience the utter impossibility of trying to reason with my sister.

Instinctively I grabbed my coat and hurried out after Adam. He was just starting the car when I hopped on the running-board and naturally he couldn't shove me off.

So he merely said in a terrible tone, "Well, what now, Scourge?"

I don't think this was a nice way to speak to me and some more appropriate time I will get even with him. Now I merely climbed in beside him and said pleadingly, "Don't be angry with me, Adam. I was just trying to help you. Maybe we can think of something else."

Adam said, "Hah!" in a loud insulting tone.

But I ignored this, merely saying meekly, "You see, I—I like you so much, Adam, and I want Alicia to be happy—and I know she cares a lot for you."

I put a great deal of pathos into my tone and it was most effective. Adam looked ashamed and then he reached out and hugged me, a sort of painful, big-brotherly hug.

And just at that moment, who should come strolling up but Brose! He often drops in unexpectedly, but he couldn't have picked a worse time. I suppose Adam was embarrassed, anyway he hastily removed his arm from about my shoulders and this made it much, much worse! Brose immediately jumped to the conclusion that that casual embrace really meant something!

I murmured weakly, "Hello, Brose—looking for me?"

And Adam stammered, "Hello, f-fella."

Brose spoke in the most utterly cold and implacable tone I have ever heard. "I can see I wasn't expected!"

I never knew he could get so angry and naturally I was tremendously flattered. But imagine my dismay and astonishment when he simply glared at me once and then, without another word, turned on his heel and stalked off.

I called pleadingly, "Brose, don't be a dope! Come back."

And Adam yelled, "Hey, listen — you've got me all wrong!"

But Brose paid no attention whatever and I was never so utterly thrilled in my life. I was sorry, too, of course, but not awfully worried, because I was practically certain Brose would forgive me.

Adam said, "Now I seem to have got you in a jam, too, kid. I'm sorry."

"That's okay," I said magnanimously. "He'll get over it." And then I was silent for a long time, thinking.

When I had things all worked out, I inquired in an enigmatic tone, "Adam, if Brose can be so jealous, how much more jealous could Alicia be over you?"

Adam, who is somewhat dumb at times, merely said, "Huh?"

So then I went into details, my idea being that if Alicia had cause to be jealous, she'd be more anxious to forgive Adam than if she was sure he was waiting around abjectly, not looking at another girl.

"But why would she be jealous?" Adam asked. "She knows I don't care about any other girl."

I pointed out, "She doesn't actually have to have cause — any more than Brose had cause just then. So long as a person thinks there's something to be jealous over—"

I proceeded to outline my scheme, which, briefly, was as follows: We'd pretend Adam had invited me to his dance in Alicia's place. She would suffer bitter pangs of jealousy. Then, too, if I knew her as well as I thought I did, she couldn't bear the idea of my being able to take him away from her. She'd have to forgive him in self-defence. And then everyone would be happy and I could wear her second-best formal for the dance with Brose—provided Brose forgave me.

It took me a while to persuade Adam, but at last I succeeded. When he left, I came in to tell Alicia about the dance, but she had gone to bed and locked her door, so I guess she was already a little jealous over the mere fact of our sitting out in the car talking for almost an hour.

While I was getting ready for bed, it occurred to me that I hadn't written Janet a letter all week. So I sat down right then and dashed one off. It was a nice long newsy one, too. I told her Toots was fine and that he and Midge had been so good lately it was little short of miraculous. I mentioned Dad's suggesting facetiously that they must be sickening for something and Mother's saying, No, it was just her kind but firm discipline.

Then I went on to tell Janet all the latest developments between Alicia and Adam and me and Brose. And I asked her whether she thought there was the slightest chance Brose wouldn't forgive me.

I wasn't actually worried, but a little reassurance would help. And, after all, being married, maybe Janet knows more about men than I do.

I GOT up a little late the next morning, maybe because I had stayed up so long the night before writing to Janet. Dad was just leaving for the office as I came downstairs, so I gave him my letter to post. Then I kissed him good-bye and hurried on into the dining-room.

Midge and Toots had just finished their breakfast and were scrambling down from their chairs as I came in. They trooped off to the library to play for the fifteen minutes or so before Midge was due to start for school. So that left just Mother and Alicia and me at the table, which gave me a golden opportunity to spring my news.

I said very innocently, "Mother, couldn't you possibly do something about a new formal for me? Or can I wear Alicia's as she isn't going to use it? Either her new one or her black net would do."

Alicia let out a low moan like a tiger defending her young or something and said, "Mother, will you make her leave me alone? She certainly can't wear my clothes."

Mother said, "Of course not, Tobey. Your yellow dress is lovely. And for a high-school club dance right here in town—"

This was the opening I had hoped for, so I said, "Oh, no, Mother, not a high-school dance. You see, Brose is mad at me and Alicia's mad at Adam, so we're going to Adam's dance together."

Alicia gasped hoarsely, "We? You mean—you and Adam?" Her voice went off into such a funny little squeak at the end, I kept my face serious by a supreme effort.

"Why, yes. Isn't that all right?"

Alicia exploded furiously, "It's just lovely! I'm so glad—for you both!" And with that she burst into tears, which she seems to do very easily, and tore away from the table and up to her room, slamming the door forcibly behind her.

"Oh, dear," Mother said. And then she regarded me very strangely. "But—Tobey, I can hardly believe this. You mean—Adam wants you to go up for his dance?"

I knew he didn't really want me to, but I didn't have to tell Mother a lie. I said, "After all, if Alicia chooses to pass him up, that doesn't mean he's taboo, does it?"

Mother said uncertainly. "Well—no. But it seems queer."

I finished my toast hastily and jumped up from the table before she could think of any more questions. "I have to rush now. I overslept."

Mother nodded. "Hurry. Don't be late for school."

I grabbed up my books and coat and got away fast. I felt pretty complacent about the whole affair, because I could tell just by the way Alicia had taken the news that she would die before she would let me go anywhere with Adam. So it seemed as though everything was under control.

Brose ignored me all day at school, but he looked definitely unhappy, so I didn't worry. I felt pretty sure I could get around him when the time came.

I really thought, though, that he'd hold out longer than he did. My power over him must have been stronger than I'd realised. Shortly after dinner that night our doorbell rang and when I went to answer it, there was Brose. My heart leaped at the sight of him, standing there looking sheepish and apologetic. I knew we were going to make up and I was glad.

"H'lo, Tobey."

"H'lo, Brose."

"I——" he gulped, and his face got sort of red. "I want to talk to you."

I nodded and led the way into the library, where we could be alone. There was a fire in the fireplace and the lamps cast a sort of rosy romantic glow over everything and it was a very fitting place indeed to make up a quarrel. I saw now why Alicia and Adam liked this room so well.

When we were seated, Brose said in a sort of strangled voice, "Tobey—will you—that is—you see, I felt awful last night, seeing that wolf Adam with his arm around you and—and—"

At this point there was a slight sound behind us and I looked around and saw with horror that Alicia had followed us into the room. She was standing just inside the doorway with what I can only describe as a ghoulish expression on her face.

A sense of the most awful foreboding filled me.

Alicia drawled in a positively poisonous tone, "Oh, but Brose, you don't understand. Tobey is Adam's latest conquest. He's taking her to his fraternity dance on Saturday night."

I could see Brose stiffen and I tried to think of something to say that would let him know it was just a ruse. But what could I say without enlightening Alicia, too?

Before I had anything figured out, Brose demanded, "But what about my dance?"

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Naturally I floundered, with Alicia standing there gloating. "W-well, you see, Brose—I can explain if only—"

Brose shook his head and fixed me with a cold unwavering stare. "You needn't explain a thing. Just answer me. Have you a date for Saturday night with Adam?"

I gulped miserably, "Well, yes—but, you see—"

Brose said frigidly, "That's all I want to know! I've been wishing I'd invited Mary Andrews—now I can do it."

With that he turned and left and I could have died.

The front door slammed after him. I said chokingly to Alicia, "I hope you're happy now!"

She answered calmly, "At least I'm happier than I've been for some time!"

I suddenly couldn't stand any more, but I managed to leave the library with dignity. And I didn't cry until I was upstairs in my own room with the door shut. Even then I didn't cry very long—tears are so futile. I just lay there on my bed, staring up at the ceiling.

After a while I heard the door-bell ring again and I jumped up and sneaked out to the head of the stairs to see if it was Brose. But it wasn't. It was Adam that Alicia was letting in. I could tell by the quavery way Alicia said, "Hello, Adam," that she meant to make up with him. And then they went into the library and shut the door.

Well, that settled things.

I went numbly back to my room and undressed and got into bed, even if it was only eight o'clock. What did I have to stay up for?

My last waking thought was that it was a good thing I hadn't got a new dress because under the circumstances it would only be wasted . . .

I was quiet and sad the next morning at breakfast and Alicia was positively glowing. But no one seemed to notice either of us. Midge and Toots behaved like two little fiends upsetting milk, arguing and crying, almost coming to blows.

They kept both my parents busy trying to maintain some semblance of order and when they had finally left the table, Dad inquired with heavy sarcasm, "What happened to your kind but firm discipline this morning, my dear? A few more such meals and I'll have ulcers."

"You'll have them?" Mother sighed. "What about me?"

"We'll have them together," Dad conceded. And he added plaintively as he retired behind the financial page of the morning paper, "We're getting too old for this sort of thing."

"Adam and I," Alicia announced beatifically, "have made up. So I'll be going up tomorrow for the week-end after all."

"How nice," Mother said. Then she frowned at me. "But—yesterday morning you told me you were going with him, Tobey."

"I changed my mind," I said quickly, only hoping Adam hadn't spilled the whole scheme to Alicia in his zeal to make up. And apparently he hadn't, or she would have begun gloating over my discomfiture then and there.

Instead she said merely, "Or he changed his mind," in a slightly snippy tone.

I finished my breakfast in dignified silence and left for school.

Every time I encountered Brose in the hall, we ignored each other pointedly. And once when I saw him he was deep in conversation with Mary Andrews and didn't notice me at all.

I walked part of the way home that afternoon with Barbie Walters. Barbie has dark hair cut in bangs and is cute and wears harlequin glasses with red frames. All my innermost secrets are safe with Barbie and vice versa. So naturally, when she inquired why I was acting lower than a worm's tummy, I told her all the details. I thought maybe it would help a little, just getting it off my chest.

When I had finished, Barbie sympathetically offered me half of the chocolate bar she had in her pocket and which she had evidently intended saving till after our paths separated. She exclaimed, "How absolutely ghoulish of Alicia!"

I nodded, chewing the chocolate without really tasting it.

"And of Brose," Barbie added. "He should have had more confidence in you than that. And to take Mary Andrews, of all people! She makes me tired, she and her airs, just because she imagines she's a glamor girl!"

BARBIE meant well, but I suddenly found that talking about it didn't help. "It's just one of those situations a person has to bear alone," I said. "But I am never going to forgive Brose for the way he has treated me—never as long as I live."

"Well," Barbie said through a mouthful of chocolate, "I guess I wouldn't either. Men are such dopes—all but a few of them, that is."

I knew she was thinking of Sox Trevor. I didn't feel it would be fair to disillusion her by pointing out that they were all alike, really. But she'd find out just as I had . . .

I dragged through the rest of the day and woke up on Saturday morning determined to keep so busy I wouldn't have time to think. My mother was pleasantly surprised when I cleaned up my room without her even having to suggest it, and ran the vacuum around the living-room and dining-room and library as well.

Midge and Toots were still acting as though they had a grudge against the world and getting in each other's hair every other minute, so all of us had our hands fairly full with them.

Alicia was catching the one o'clock train and Dad had intended to drive her to the station. But when the time came, he had the children so contentedly playing with Toots' electric train that Mother suggested he keep on amusing them and let me drive Alicia to the station.

I didn't mind. Anything to keep busy and keep my mind off my troubles was my idea. But I do think Alicia felt a little uncomfortable and ashamed, especially since everything had turned out so well for her.

At the station, as she got out of the car, she said, "I'm sorry you won't be going to your dance, too, tonight, Tobey. Really I am."

"Well," I said dully, "you have fun, anyway."

Alicia nodded. I can't remember ever having seen her in such a mellow mood. She said, "If you were going to your dance, I wouldn't mind if you wanted to wear my black net."

"Thanks," I said, trying to smile. "Only I'm not going."

I sat in the car and waited till the train had pulled out. I was just going to start the engine when who should walk past but Brose, and he looked as though he had suffered. He stared straight at me and my lip sort of trembled, although I was too proud to speak first.

So Brose went on and my heart fell, but then all of a sudden he turned around and came back with a determined stride. He yanked open the door of the car and climbed in beside me.

And then he said, indicating the departing train, "I expected you to go on that, not Alicia."

"Was that why you came down to the station?" I inquired.

Brose glared at me. "Why did you decide not to go with the mildew after all?"

"He and Alicia made up."

Brose's voice sounded sort of hesitant. "That—was pretty hard on you, I suppose?"

"Don't be so stupid!" I answered hotly, stung by the utter absurdity of the idea that I cared what Adam Wentworth did. "You know what I think of Adam—I've told you often enough. This whole set-up between us was merely a ruse to make Alicia jealous, so she'd stop being so goofy."

"A ruse?" Brose seemed to be sitting somewhat closer to me, although I hadn't noticed him move. "You mean you actually weren't planning to go to the dance with Adam after all?"

It took quite a while, but we got all the details straightened out eventually.

Finally Brose laughed and said, "Well, I hope you didn't take me too seriously, either—all that I said about asking Mary to the dance. I guess I just wanted to hurt you, Tobey."

I inquired in a hushed tone, "Didn't you ask her?"

"That hag!" Brose said. "Of course not. So now, if it isn't too late, Tobey . . ."

So we went to the dance and had a simply terrif time! Alicia's black net looked too utterly divine on me and Brose sent me a lovely spray of gardenias to wear with it. I guess there is really no other man in the world quite so wonderful as he.

Imagine my astonishment on waking up to Sunday morning to learn why Midge and Toots had been such unutterable little blights lately. Mother got worried over their symptoms last night and had the doctor come and take a look at them. So I sat right down and spent the greater part of the afternoon writing a nice long newsy letter to Janet.

I not only told her about her child, but I threw in all the exciting details about the dance and about Alicia and Adam and Brose and me. Because, after all, she's probably going to need a little cheering up when she learns that Midge and Toots both have chicken pox.

. . . . . .

Chicken pox in the house isn't nearly so much of a nuisance as I imagined it would be. For one thing, all of us grownups had had it, so we weren't affected by the quarantine. And, for another, neither Toots nor Midge was very ill. They looked awful, all covered with little red bumps, but they didn't feel bad, except for the itching. And the worst of that was over in a few days.

So then it was merely a matter of waiting for the rush to disappear and keeping Toots and Midge amused in the house. Things got a bit hectic at times, but within about three weeks it was all over.

The dark cloud had a silver lining to this extent. My mother, who is always trying to, lost five pounds. And she didn't even have to diet. She got a simply super new gabardine suit to celebrate. So Dad said that in the long run it was the man who paid, just as it always was. But he didn't really seem to mind.

Dad was away on one of his business trips for a couple of weeks in February. My mother hates to have him gone and things sort of deteriorated around

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home, especially the meals. That's to be expected in a household composed entirely of women, except for Toots, of course, who is really too young to count as a male.

It wasn't long after Dad's return that we got an ecstatic wire from Janet, saying that Jimmy had finally wangled a transfer to California and that they'd be home almost at once to pick up Toots.

Before we had had time to get used to the idea of not having him around any more, Janet and Jimmy had come and gone, taking their offspring with them. They were only in Edgewood a few days, as Jimmy had to report for work at once and they were both anxious to get settled in their new home.

It was really cute the way Mother worried over whether Janet would take proper care of Toots, and gave her all kinds of detailed instructions, just as Janet had given Mother before. Women are funny, especially mothers and grandmothers.

You have no idea how much we missed Toots, although it was certainly a lot more peaceful with him gone. And the fact that we really felt lost with him gone only goes to prove you can get used to anything.

Spring wasn't very nice this year, cool and rainy. But towards Easter it improved a little. During spring vacation the weather was mild enough for our crowd to have a bicycle hike and barbecue out in the country and that was lots of fun.

Adam Wentworth was home from college the week after Easter. Naturally Alicia was very happy and, for a wonder, they didn't have a single serious quarrel.

They simply billed and cooed all the time. And the upshot was that they decided to get married in June. No one was particularly surprised about this. There was really nothing to keep them from getting married whenever they wanted to. Although Adam still had a couple of years to go before he would be a full-fledged doctor, money wasn't any obstacle. His father might be a little tight in some ways, but he heartily approved of early marriage and he liked Alicia very much, so he was delighted to hear they had set the date for their wedding.

He immediately offered to increase Adam's allowance handsomely and promised them a Caribbean cruise for their honeymoon as a token of his complete approval.

My parents offered no objection, either. Mother didn't think that two months left quite enough time to get ready for such a momentous event, but she said she'd do her best. Dad thought this was ridiculous. He said women didn't manage their time properly and that he'd be willing to bet that he could make all arrangements for any wedding, no matter how elaborate, in two weeks, let alone two months.

My mother merely smiled. Then, abruptly, her smile faded.

She asked anxiously, her glance on Alicia and Adam, "But—where will you live? A college town's bound to be dreadfully crowded. Have you thought about that?"

Alicia beamed proudly at Adam. "It's all arranged. Adam's thought of everything, haven't you, darling?"

Adam grinned. "Well, I thought about that anyway."

He went on to explain that he had tentatively reserved one of the huts that flanked the University campus. He finished, chuckling, "I had my mind made up I was going to put on a high-pressure campaign this week to talk Alicia into a June wedding. So I rented the hut with my fingers crossed, hoping I could persuade her."

Mother looked a little doubtful. "A hut?" she repeated faintly.

"Now, Laura," Dad admonished her. "Don't be old-fashioned. Ever so many marriages are starting out in huts these days and going very well, too. In our day a three-room apartment was the absolute minimum for a young couple. Who knows, by the time Midge grows up, maybe a telephone booth will suffice."

"Oh, they're darling, Mother really," Alicia assured her. "When I went up for Adam's dance in January, we had lunch with Jane and Joe Davis who live in one of them."

"Well," Mother said doubtfully, "I suppose it'll be all right, if it's the way other young couples are living. But it seems so gipsy-ish . . ."

On Sunday afternoon, the last day of spring vacation, an event of what seemed to be world-shaking importance took place. This was a formal call, by Alicia and Adam and his father on Adam's great-aunt, Miss Tess Wentworth.

I couldn't blame Alicia for feeling pretty jittery over the whole business. Everyone in Edgewood knew of Miss Tess Wentworth, but very few knew her personally. Her house, a great gingeroready affair with a three-story turret and an enormous bay window bordered in stained glass, was one of the town's oldest landmarks. It was set far back behind a tall fence, with, actually, an iron deer on the lawn and a hitching post at the kerb.

Miss Tess scarcely ever went anywhere, so you never saw her. But Mr. Wentworth and Adam frequently called on her and treated her with such respect that Alicia said it amounted almost to worship. So naturally nothing would do but that Aunt Tess must meet Adam's intended bride.

ALICIA did her hair over three times and changed her dress at least twice getting ready. She was in quite a state.

"Now, dear, just relax," Mother told her soothingly, as we both hovered around trying to be helpful. "You look very nice. Doesn't she look nice, Tobey?"

"Super," I agreed. "Aunt Tess'll love you."

"I look awful," Alicia moaned. "But Adam said dress conservatively. Do you think I look conservative enough, Mother? That awful old woman!"

"Now, dear, there is absolutely nothing to work yourself into such a state over."

"But why don't Adam and his father come?" Alicia wailed, hurrying over to the window and peering out. "It must be nearly three and that's when we're due there. Adam warned me not to be late—"

"They're not late," Mother reminded gently. "It's only a little after two-thirty. They'll be here soon. And I know you're going to have a lovely time."

"I won't," Alicia denied, brushing at a purely imaginary speck of dust on her skirt. "I'll spill my tea. I'll knock something over. Adam says her house is full of absolutely priceless antiques and that means a lot of bric-a-brac."

None of us had realised Midge was hanging around unobtrusively, till she said in a solemn tone, "The kids at school say she's queer. Aren't you scared?"

"Hush, Midge," Mother admonished her. "That isn't a nice way to talk. Miss Wentworth is very old, maybe a little eccentric."

"That's the same as queer, isn't it?" Midge insisted.

Mother gave her a warning look. She told Alicia, "Everything will go off beautifully, I'm sure. If you'll just relax, dear. Stop twisting your gloves."

Fortunately the Wentworths' car drew up outside just then and Adam rushed in to get Alicia.

"Thank goodness you're ready," he said as she came down the stairs with Mother and Midge and me at her heels. "My father didn't think he'd better come in, for fear we'd be delayed. We don't want to keep Aunt Tess waiting."

"I," Alicia said with emphasis, "have been ready for fifteen minutes. Where have you been, may I ask?"

We didn't hear Adam's answer, as he was hurrying her down the front steps by that time. Alicia looked as though she were pulling back just a little out of sheer contrariness. Mother breathed a sigh of what sounded like relief as the car door slammed. I couldn't say I blamed her. I felt a little relieved myself.

Dad's voice drifted out to us from the library: "What is a nine-letter word meaning 'profuse'?"

"Do you mean," gasped my mother "you've been doing a crossword puzzle during all this?"

"All what?" asked Dad in mild surprise.

Aren't men wonderful?

Naturally, Mother and Midge and I couldn't wait till Alicia got home to hear all the details. Adam had to leave for college almost immediately after their return, so we weren't kept in suspense too long. As soon as the door closed after him we started firing questions at Alicia.

It seemed the ordeal had been, if possible, even worse than she had expected. Miss Tess, she said, was tall and grim, with white hair done in the fashion of the Gay 'Nineties. Her black taffeta dress touched the floor and rustled when she moved and stood out as if she must have had half-a-dozen petticoats beneath. She wore a gold watch, on a fleur-de-lis pin set with diamonds, on her bosom.

"But that wasn't the worst of it," Alicia said darkly. "It was her manner."

"You mean she was rude to you?" Mother asked.

"Oh, she was polite enough, like a queen being gracious to her subjects. I suppose it's partly the way she lives, all by herself in that big old house in absolutely solitary splendor, waited on hand and foot by a couple of faithful old servants who look as though they're about ready to fall apart. And then the attitude Adam and his father take towards her, they simply bow down to her. And everyone tries to shield her from even the slightest indication that the world might have changed a little during the past fifty years."

"But she's so old, dear," my mother objected. "You have to make allowances for her age."

"So she's old," Alicia agreed huffily. "Does that mean she should be encouraged to live in the past, never stepping foot out of her own grounds, summoning the people she wants to see to come to her? The way Adam and his father act, I felt as though I ought to kiss her hand, or knock my forehead on the floor—"

"Now you're exaggerating," Mother said.

"Not very much," Alicia sniffed. "The thing is, she's so accustomed to having her every wish taken as a command that she simply orders everybody around in the most dictatorial manner. But they needn't expect me to treat her as though she's the dowager queen, or something. I won't! And if Adam hadn't had to dash right

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off I'd have told him so, too. It's ridiculous!"

I, for one, was glad Adam had had to dash. Otherwise, he and Alicia would probably have spoiled their wonderful record of going for seven whole days without a single disagreement.

Pretty soon I began to see what Mother had meant when she said two months didn't leave much time to get ready for the wedding. I had no idea there were so many details involved. Of course, Alicia wanted a big, beautiful church ceremony with all the trimmings. I didn't blame her for that. After all, a girl's wedding day is something special and not to be dismissed lightly.

I have always felt my sister Janet made a big mistake letting Jimmy talk her into simply driving over to the county seat and getting married one Saturday afternoon and then coming home and telling the family about it. True, neither of them wanted to go through all the fuss of a big wedding, still it seemed to me Janet got a little cheated.

The way Alicia went on you'd think nobody ever thought of such a thing as getting married before. I think weddings are wonderful too, but there's no need to get into such a complete dither as Alicia did. And my mother, who is usually a fairly calm person, was almost as bad. All April and May our house fairly seethed with activity connected with the wedding. And as the time shrank to weeks instead of months the pace grew more hectic.

Mother had all the mundane details to take care of, naturally, such as what to serve at the wedding breakfast and which caterers to hire and whether old Dr. Cartwright, who had christened Alicia, but was now retired, would be hurt if she asked young Dr. Beecher, whom Alicia liked better to officiate at the wedding.

Alicia concentrated on things like choosing her bridesmaids and deciding what they'd wear and selecting her wedding dress and trousseau. Then there were fittings, which took up a good deal of her time and made her nervous and irritable. Between her and Mother and their endless discussions of this and that they got the whole family dizzy.

Midge and I, as well as my father, tried to be helpful in every way we could, such as running errands and giving our opinion when requested on color schemes and the selection of flowers for the altar. Also we were patient and for the most part uncomplaining about eating beans for dinner on those days when Mother had been too busy to prepare anything else.

One night, as we sat at the table over dessert, which had turned out to be canned fruit and bought tarts, Dad said plaintively, "I'll be glad when the wedding's over."

All of us stared at him, astonished. Alicia's lip began to tremble in an ominous sort of way.

Mother said, "Why, Henry! What a dreadful thing to say!"

Dad said stubbornly, "It's true. Not that I'll be glad to get rid of Alicia. But all this fuss and upheaval—it's barbaric. Look at your mother, worn to a frazzle. Look at Alicia, nervous as a cat. I said it before and I'll say it again. I'll be glad when the whole business is over and things settle down to normal!"

Alicia burst into tears.

"Now look what you've done," Mother said severely. "Aren't you ashamed, Henry?"

Dad looked from one of us to another, all the way round the table, for any indication of support in the stand he had taken. When he saw none, he sighed. Then he said, "Not ashamed, Laura, merely outnumbered. I'm sorry, Alicia. I apologise. Now stop crying."

I felt a little like a traitor for not backing Dad up. I knew exactly how he felt. Except for one thing, I'd have wished the wedding was over, too. It was the thought of my own thrilling part in the proceedings that had upheld me during the whole mad whirl of preparation.

I was to be one of Alicia's bridesmaids. And I had never been a bridesmaid before. My dress was the most heavenly shade of aqua, nice with my coppery hair and brown eyes. And I and the other three bridesmaids were going to wear velvet headbands to match our dresses and carry she most adorable old-fashioned bouquets with paper lace frills. Oh, it would be swoony and all my friends were simply green with envy.

And I knew Midge felt exactly the same as I did. Because she was to be a flower girl and wear her very first long dress. And her hair would be all in curls and she would carry a little basket of rosebuds.

This would be quite a departure for Midge, who is definitely on the tomboy side, with pigtails and freckles and, usually a smudge of jelly on her chin. I knew she was simply thrilled silly at the prospect.

So no wonder we couldn't sympathise with Dad in his subversive attitude.

ONE afternoon a few weeks before the wedding, Midge and I happened to be alone in the living-room. School holidays had just begun and I was browsing through a movie magazine and Midge was eating. She practically always eats.

Suddenly she said, over and around a large bite of apple, "Tobey, I get so excited just thinking about the wedding I could burst!"

I grinned at her. Midge is nine now and doesn't seem nearly so much of a baby as she used to. "I'm thrilled about it myself," I had to admit.

Midge stared dreamily into space. She said raptly, "If anything happens so I don't get to wear that dress and be in the wedding, I'll die."

"What would happen?" I asked. "You've had mumps and measles and chicken-pox."

"Oh, not to me," Midge said solemnly. "I'm taking good care of myself. I even stopped riding my bike no hands till after the wedding in case I might break a leg or something. It's Alicia I'm worried about—and Adam. Adam gets home from college the middle of next week. That'll give 'em a good ten days of seeing each other every day before they get married. And you know, Tobey, they've never gone for ten whole days in their lives without having a terrific fight—not when he was home from college, that is."

I had to admit that what she said was true. "But they always make up eventually," I reminded her. "So I guess we'd just better keep our fingers crossed."

"Let's make a pact, Tobey," Midge leaned forward solemnly, her elbows on her knees. "Let's make a pact that we'll do everything in our power to see that they don't get into a fight before the wedding."

"Sure," I said. "Now let me finish this story . . ."

. . .

The day Adam got home from college Alicia was feeling a bit low. A letter had just come from Janet, explaining that they couldn't get back for the wedding. It seemed she was going to have a little brother or sister for Toots around the first of the year and wasn't feeling very well. And her doctor absolutely forbade such a long trip.

Naturally we were all thrilled over this news, but sorry because they couldn't be with us. Even their lovely gift of sterling silver hadn't helped much to dissipate Alicia's disappointment.

But Adam's arrival cheered her up. And she proceeded to show him all the wedding gifts that had accumulated.

When she showed him the cheques people had sent instead of presents, not knowing what young people really want in a hut, Adam exclaimed, grinning, "Holy socks, we're rich! Is there one from Aunt Tess?"

Alicia shook her head. "No, there isn't. Nor any gift, either."

Midge and I, who had been hovering unobtrusively in the background, exchanged secret, faintly apprehensive glances. We knew what a touchy subject Adam's Aunt Tess was with Alicia. Too bad she had to come up so soon.

But it seemed our fears were unfounded. Adam merely bent down and kissed Aucia on the end of her nose. He said, "Oh, well, she'll come through handsomely when she gets around to it. Love me?"

"Oh, darling," Alicia answered warmly, "you know I do."

Both of them had apparently forgotten that Midge and I were there. So we took advantage of their absorption in each other to fade away quietly.

Things went as smoothly as could be expected the next few days. Alicia was endlessly busy with fittings and showers, and Adam was busy with all the things bridegrooms have to do before they get married. They went to parties practically every night. Being a bridesmaid, I got invited to some of the parties, too, even though their crowd was a little old for me.

One day, about a week before the wedding, Alicia called me into her room. She was standing in front of her long mirror, all dressed up, hat, heels, white gloves, everything.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To tea with Adam's precious Aunt Tess—again!" Alicia said with ominous emphasis. "As if I haven't enough to do without that! Am I absolutely perfect in every detail?"

"You look swell," I told her. "But—do you have to go?"

"Oh, yes," Alicia said tartly. "She issued a summons. Naturally, Adam wants me to look my best."

"Maybe it won't be so bad this time," I suggested.

"Why not?" Alicia snapped. "So long as the entire Wentworth family treat her like the dowager queen, naturally she'll walk all over them. It's ridiculous!"

Adam's car honked just then and Alicia marched off to join him, a decidedly nasty gleam in her eye. If I hadn't had a tennis date with Brose that afternoon I'd have worried myself silly before Alicia and Adam got home.

Adam stayed at our house for dinner that night, which seemed a good sign. At least, he and Alicia were still on speaking terms, which was almost more than I'd dared expect.

I was appalled when Mother inquired how tea had gone. Didn't she realise it was best to let sleeping dogs lie?

"Fine," Adam answered. He beamed at Alicia approvingly. "Aunt Tess likes you. I can tell."

"Can you?" Alicia asked a shade coolly. "I thought she merely tolerated me because I'm going to be one of the family."

Mother looked as though she were sorry she had brought up the subject. Dad manfully went on calmly eating, unaware that there was likely to be an explosion any minute. Midge flashed

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me an apprehensive look and I noticed that she was eating with her fingers crossed.

"Oh, no," Adam said to Alicia, a faint note of reproval in his tone. "You just don't know how to take Aunt Tess."

"I don't see why you take her so seriously," Alicia snapped. "Would the heavens fall if she didn't like me?"

"I didn't mean it that way," Adam apologised, and I breathed a little more easily. "It's just that she's so old and sort of set in her ideas. She hardly ever sees anyone but her own contemporaries, so it's hard for her to realise that girls dress differently nowadays."

"Why didn't you tell me?" Alicia asked with ominous sweetness. "I'd have worn a hoopskirt."

At that moment, Midge very awkwardly upset her glass of milk, creating, to say the least, a diversion. By the time we'd got the mess mopped up and Midge had apologised for her clumsiness and told us all how sorry she was, everyone had forgotten what we'd been talking about when the accident happened.

I might have thought it was an accident if Midge hadn't taken advantage of the first opportunity to give me a secret wink.

But all her efforts proved to be wasted. A few days later, with the ceremony looming a scant twenty-four hours off, Miss Tess Wentworth's wedding gift arrived. And it was definitely the straw that finished off the camel.

We had just finished an early dinner, Mother and Dad, Alicia and Midge and I, when our door-bell rang. It proved to be two delivery men, carrying a crate all of six feet long and a couple of feet wide and thick. The crate was addressed to Alicia and the sender was Miss Tess Wentworth.

I felt a smotherly sense of foreboding settle over me as Mother directed the men to take it into the sun-room.

As soon as they had gone, Dad got busy with a hammer. Alicia and Mother and Midge and I stood around in an expectant circle. As the gift came into sight, we all gave a sort of concerted gasp.

It was, of all things, a grandfather clock. The tallest, the oldest, the most ornately carved one I had ever seen. Anything more incongruous and utterly unadapted to life in a hut couldn't be imagined.

I was afraid to look at Alicia. I think we all were.

It was Midge who finally spoke. "It's —big, isn't it?"

"Big!" the word exploded from Alicia like a cork out of a champagne bottle. "Big! Why it's—it's the most absolutely ridiculous thing I ever saw! That awful woman! If this is her idea of a joke—"

Midge put in doubtfully, "Maybe she didn't understand that you were going to live in a hut."

"She did!" Alicia snapped. "I told her the last time I was there. Adam will simply have to explain to her how unsuitable it is and ask her to kindly take it back. I'm going to call him up this minute and tell him so!"

With that she turned and stalked haughtily from the room, with all of us calling remonstrations after her. She shut the door hard, making it clear that she wanted her conversation with Adam to be absolutely private.

Midge said pathetically, "What'll we do? They'll have a fight for sure."

Only the tense of her final statement was wrong. They were already having a fight. Even through the closed door we could hear Alicia yelling at Adam. And, apparently, he was yelling right back.

We heard Alicia say furiously, "You're nothing but a doormat where your aunt's concerned! You're afraid of her! And if you think for a minute I'd go ahead and marry you, now that I know what a coward you are—No! . . . No! I never want to see you again as long as I live!"

With that she hung up so hard it's a wonder she didn't break the telephone, and then she burst into tears and ran up to her room. Midge was wringing her hands and I felt like it. Our parents stared at each other fearfully.

Dad ran his hands upward through his hair in a frantic gesture. "Women!" he said scathingly. But that wasn't particularly constructive.

"When she's had time to calm down a little, I'll talk to her," Mother said. "She can't do this!"

After a short strategic wait, they both tried, first Mother and then Dad and then the two of them together. But it was no use, simply no use at all. The wedding was definitely off.

"But what can we do?" my mother wailed. "All those people invited. All those gifts. Dr. Beecher cancelled an out-of-town trip in order to be here. And we know they love each other—they'll be sorry later on. If only they weren't both so stubborn."

The rest of that evening passed like a nightmare. Mother went to bed with one of her migraine headaches. I sat around hoping Adam would phone or come over. But the only time the phone rang it was Brose. And I was quite short with him, because I kept thinking maybe Adam was trying to call Alicia.

I don't suppose any of us slept much that night. I know I didn't. And I could hear Midge doing a regular whirling dervish routine in her room next to mine. We both dragged down to breakfast late the next morning, looking wan and hollow-eyed and feeling terrible. Mother was still in bed with her headache and with all the blinds drawn. Dad was nowhere about. I had no idea where he'd gone.

I told Midge so when she asked me. And then I added, "Unless he's gone down to notify the newspaper the wedding's been called off."

"Oh Tobey, don't say that!" Midge sighed, dripping cereal down the front of her T-shirt and not caring.

JUST then, who should wander into the breakfast-room but the cause of all our troubles. Alicia had on her old flowered chintz housecoat that faded in the wash and her hair tied up in a bandanna. She looked pale and her eyes were still a little pink from all the crying she'd done last night. But the set of her mouth was grimly stubborn.

"I just want a cup of coffee," she murmured. "My head's simply splitting."

"Oh, Alicia," Midge clasped her hands on the edge of the table in a beseeching gesture, "please make up with Adam and get married."

"I don't care to discuss it," Alicia said. She looked from Midge to me. "Well, don't sit there staring at me like a pair of dying calves! I see my future happiness means nothing whatever to you, if you want me to entrust it to a man like Adam."

"But you can't have stopped loving him," I began, "just because his aunt—"

"Don't bring that woman into the conversation," Alicia cut in sharply. "I prefer to forget her very existence."

She poured herself a cup of coffee, took a few sips. "Besides, I haven't noticed Adam making any effort to persuade me to make up." She fixed Midge and me with an accusing glance, as though it was our fault. Her voice had thickened a little as she added. "It's perfectly obvious his aunt means more to him than I do—" she broke off with a sort of muffled sob, put her cup down hastily and rushed back upstairs, her housecoat billowing out behind her.

Midge emitted a miserable, "Gosh!"

We went through the motions of finishing our breakfast. Midge drifted away somewhere, and I carried our dishes out to the kitchen. Then, as I set them on the sink, I thought of what Alicia had said about Adam not making any effort to persuade her to forgive him. And suddenly an idea burst into full flower in my brain. A really super idea! I couldn't imagine why it hadn't occurred to me sooner.

I went quietly out into the hall and picked up the phone and carried it into the coat cupboard with me. This is possible to do by stretching the cord out to its very fullest extent. Then I shut the door tight. When I heard Adam's voice at the other end of the wire, I said, very softly and persuasively, "You know who this is, don't you?"

He didn't doubt for a minute it was Alicia. People are always telling us we sound alike, especially on the phone. And this was once it was going to come in handy.

"Darling!" he exclaimed in such a husky, emotion-packed tone that I immediately began to feel terribly guilty. "I've been hoping and praying you'd call. You can't imagine how—"

"Adam, wait," I broke in desperately. "I think we should talk things over face to face, not on the phone."

"So do I," Adam agreed warmly. "I'll be right over, sweetheart. I know we can straighten everything out."

After we'd hung up, I hurried up to Alicia's room. She was slumped disconsolately on her unmade bed, still in her old faded housecoat, brooding. I saw I was going to have to work fast. It wouldn't take Adam more than ten or fifteen minutes to get from his house to ours, especially in his present state of mind.

"You know," I said thoughtfully, "I shouldn't be surprised if Adam came over to see you this morning."

"Wouldn't you, Tobey?" Alicia's tone sounded wistful. But then her chin grew stubborn and a gleam I didn't like came into her eye. "I doubt it. He's too contrary. He wouldn't make the first move."

"Still," I argued, "a man's wedding is pretty important to him."

"Not if he no longer loves the girl he was planning to marry," Alicia sniffed.

I shrugged. Long years of association with Alicia have taught me the best way to handle her.

"Even so," I said casually, "I'd get some clothes on, if I were you. I don't suppose you'd care to have him catch you looking like that, if by some chance he did come over."

I went out then. But I listened from the hall for a couple of minutes and pretty soon I could hear her moving about, so I judged she was taking my advice. I went on downstairs and hovered expectantly in the hall. Only a few minutes later a car stopped on the drive and I heard Adam taking the front steps two at a time. I hurried to the door and opened it.

"Why, Adam!" I tried hard to sound and look surprised.

He dismissed me casually. "Where's Alicia?"

"Why don't you wait in the library?" I suggested. "I'll tell her you're here."

This was truly a master stroke on my part. I know so well that the library is their favorite room in the whole house.

Alicia came out of her room just as I reached the head of the stairs after seeing Adam politely into the library

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She looked very pretty in a yellow dirndl and a white peasant blouse that left her shoulders bare for her hair to curl softly against.

"Tobey," she asked, her eyes shining, "didn't someone just come in?"

"It's Adam," I whispered. "What did I tell you? He's in the library waiting for you."

She went down the stairs very slowly, so as not to appear too anxious, I suppose. I followed at a discreet distance and, when she had gone into the library and shut the door behind her, I sneaked up fast and locked it. A nice warm glow of achievement settled over me as I pulled the key quietly out of the lock and dropped it into my pocket.

I sat down on the bottom step of the stairs, not to listen, just to wait. I could hear the sound of voices faintly from the library and in a very short while they grew louder and more emphatic, as though Alicia and Adam were starting to argue. Then I heard high heels tap angrily over to the door. The knob turned and rattled and Alicia's voice called sharply "Tobey! Tobey!"

I sat like a mouse. Soon she gave up calling and jiggling the doorknob. I heard Adam's voice, then hers, then his again. Even without being able to distinguish any words, I could tell their tones were growing less angry by the second. Before long they were talking so sweet and low I couldn't hear anything but a gentle murmur, with long, expressive silences in between.

I had just about decided it would be safe to release them and fade out of the picture, when to my astonishment the front door opened and my father and Adam's father sailed into the hall.

I simply sat there staring up at them blankly.

"Where is Adam?" Mr. Wentworth demanded, scowling down at me. "We went home first to look for him and the housekeeper said he was here. Of all the fool nonsense, quarrelling with Alicia on the eve of their wedding and not even telling me about it!"

"Can you imagine," Dad put in, "Jeff didn't have any idea what had happened. He was completely in the dark."

"If you hadn't come down to the store and explained the situation," Mr. Wentworth beamed at my father, very man-to-man," I probably wouldn't have known a thing about it until it was too late. Now we're going to get this mix-up straightened out in short order."

"Shhhh," I admonished, eyeing the library door anxiously. "I think they've got it straightened out themselves, if only you two—"

I broke off incredulously, staring past Mr. Wentworth and my father. The front door had opened once more and through it Midge was triumphantly piloting a very old, very grim-looking lady in black taffeta that rustled, and a hat like a velvet pancake bristling with ostrich plumes.

Mr. Wentworth whirled around at the sound of that rustle, his gaze following mine. "Aunt Tess!" he exclaimed blankly.

"Where," Miss Tess Wentworth demanded in the rasping voice Alicia had described so accurately "is Adam? Why didn't the young scamp explain to me what a Quonset hut was? How was I to know a grandfather clock wouldn't fit in? Nobody tells me anything! If it weren't for this sweet child —" she laid a black gloved hand on Midge's shoulder and smiled down at her affectionately, blue jeans, soiled T-shirt, hair-curlers and all. "I might have been the innocent cause of breaking up a lovely romance."

"But, Aunt Tess," Mr. Wentworth gasped, rushing to slip a solicitous hand under her elbow as though he were afraid she might collapse any moment, "how did you get here—who told you—why?"

"Don't sputter, Jefferson," Miss Tess squelched him. "This child has more sense than any of the rest of you. She came to me and explained everything, thank goodness. Naturally, I didn't want to waste any time about setting things straight, so we came in a taxi."

"A taxi?" Mr. Wentworth squeaked in horror.

My father put his hand hastily over his mouth and I knew that he was smiling behind it. The Edgewood Cab Company has "Speed and Safety" for its slogan, but the accent seems to be on speed.

I had a hard time to refrain from bursting into laughter at the mental picture of Miss Tess streaking through the streets at breakneck speed, after scarcely setting foot outside her own grounds for some twenty years. But she seemed none the worse for her experience.

She announced, beaming, "Of course, I'll take the clock back and keep it till Alicia and Adam get a real home. In the meantime, I'll give them a cheque so they can buy something they can use right away.

Just then I became abruptly aware that Alicia was again jiggling the doorknob and that she and Adam were demanding in unison to be let out and to know who was out there.

Everyone looked a little blank as I fitted the key into the lock and turned it. All but Midge, that is. She and I gave each other a knowing wink. When we two make a pact, we really keep it . . .

FOR a wedding day that had begun as such a complete mess, I must say that Alicia's and Adam's wound up most satisfactorily. Mr. Wentworth proceeded to take Aunt Tess home with the utmost care and caution, so that she might rest from her unheard of exertions until time for the ceremony. Mother's headache vanished quickly, once the cause of her nervousness and tension had been relieved. She and Alicia flung themselves into the last minute preparations with fine fervor, with Dad and Midge and me helping in every way we could. I did manage to get Midge alone long enough to demand a few details as to just how she had succeeded in getting Miss Tess to accompany her to our house.

"It wasn't hard," Midge denied. "She's not a bad old lady when you get to know her. I was a little scared just at first, but as soon as I made myself march into that spooky old house and talk to her I knew there wasn't anything to be afraid of."

"But what did you say?"

"I just told her the truth. And as soon as I realised she didn't have any notion what a Quonset was like, I saw how it would be easy enough for her to make a mistake like sending that big clock. So I explained things politely and she understood right away. And when I told her there probably wasn't even going to be any wedding and about my beautiful dress and the rosebuds and all, she said we must waste no time straightening things out with Alicia. The cab was my idea," she added, "but Miss Tess didn't mind at all, I kind of think she got a kick out of it, once we were started."

Midge was interested to know how I'd happened to lock Alicia and Adam up in the library, so I explained all about that. What with one thing and another, time passed very quickly and almost before we realised it the hour had come to get ready for the wedding.

I don't think I have ever spent a more thrilling and exciting day. My dress was just beautiful and so was Midge's and everything went off with such wonderful smoothness it seemed almost incredible.

As I walked slowly down the chapel aisle to the stirring strains of the wedding march, all the turmoil and confusion that had gone before seemed like a fevered dream. Midge looked sweet and demure with her little flat basket of rosebuds and her long pale yellow dress. Alicia made a lovely bride. And even Adam, except for looking a little green around the gills as men always seem to at their weddings, made a very satisfactory and handsome bridegroom.

I stole a quick look through my eyelashes as I passed the pew where the Gilmans were seated. Brose was staring straight at me in absolutely entranced admiration. Needless to say, my heart swelled and I was glad I had gone to all that trouble to bring Alicia's wedding off as scheduled.

Of course, I had a pretty strong hunch Midge felt she deserved most of the credit for bringing Alicia and Adam back together. And Dad looked just a little smug as he led the bride up the aisle to the flower-decked altar, so I wouldn't be surprised if he felt it was really his conference with Mr. Wentworth that had turned the trick.

Later, when the reception at our house was under way and I had a little free time, I told Brose all about it. I knew I could rely on his not letting the story go any further and I felt as though, if I didn't get to tell someone, I'd pop.

He promised to say nothing. He laughed. Then his tone grew very solemn. "Tobey, if we do decide to get really engaged when we're older—and then married later on—promise me you'll wear a dress just like this one for our wedding."

I thought that was terribly sweet of him. "But brides usually wear white," I reminded. "White, with a train. And a veil, like Alicia wore."

"I don't care what color it is," Brose said sort of hoarsely. "But—long and—soft and—beautiful, like this dress." He smoothed a fold of it gently with his palm.

"Okay." My voice was a little husky, too. "I promise."

My mother spoke so unexpectedly near us that we both started. She had been up helping Alicia to change and now she said quietly, "Tobey, Alicia wants to see you for a moment before she goes. Can you come now?"

Of course, I jumped up and followed her to Alicia's room. Mother didn't come in, but closed the door quietly after me.

Alicia looked breathtakingly lovely in her beige suit, with the smart black accessories that set it off so perfectly. She seemed different, somehow—more poised and sure of herself, warmer and gentler. But marriage—just an hour or so of marriage—couldn't really have changed her. I must be imagining it.

She stood there, with her back towards the mirror, smiling at me. Her new beige luggage was packed and ready near the door. Already her room looked different, so neat and impersonal, somehow. The realisation struck me that it wasn't going to be Alicia's room any more and I felt queer.

"Come here, Tobey," Alicia said.

I must have looked pretty solemn as I walked across the room towards her. She asked, "What's the matter?"

"N-nothing," I gulped, "only—I just suddenly realised that you aren't going to live here any more, Alicia. I—knew it, of course. But I didn't think till this minute what it'll mean."

Alicia's smile widened a little, but it wasn't an objectionable sort of smile—I mean, she seemed so gentle and understanding, she wasn't like the same person. She said calmly, "Well, it's nice to think you'll miss me, Tobey. But after we get back from our cruise I won't

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be very far away, you know. Just living with Adam's father the rest of the summer and then up at college."

"But you won't be here in this house—you won't ever live here again—and coming back for visits won't be the same."

"You're sweet, Tobey." Alicia's arm went around my shoulders. "And don't think I don't appreciate what you did for me this morning."

She knew then that the library door getting itself locked hadn't been any accident as I had implied. And probably Adam had told her about the phone call, which he had thought was made by her. And she was thanking me—Alicia was thanking me. Marriage certainly had changed her even in a couple of hours!

She went on, "I've already thanked Dad and Midge for helping, too. You were all so good to me. And I realise now I was very foolish acting as I did. Now that Adam and I are married—" her voice softened, just saying his name "well, I realise how dreadful it would have been if I'd let anything spoil things."

"Gee, Alicia—gee—" it seemed to be all I could say.

She gave me a little hug and pushed me towards the door. "You'll know what I mean someday, Tobey—when you're in love—and just married. Now run along, like a dear. And tell Adam I'm ready."

The next few minutes were wonderful and thrilling. I got hold of Adam and he went upstairs for Alicia's bags. As the two of them came down together, Adam carrying the suitcases and Alicia close behind him, all the guests congregated in the hall to see them off. They went out the door in a perfect snowstorm of confetti and good wishes and ran down the steps to Adam's car, which was parked on the drive.

Someone had put an enormous JUST MARRIED sign on the back and tied a cow-bell and some old shoes to the rear bumper.

As the car drove off, the last I saw of Alicia was her gloved hand waving out the window. It made me feel almost like crying, although I can't imagine why. My mother was crying, just a little, and Dad was patting her shoulder and saying soothingly, "There now, Laura . . ." and things like that.

Everyone began talking and laughing and drifting back into the house. But I still felt funny and sort of choky. And then someone pressed a large clean white handkerchief into my hand and I blew my nose hard and felt better. Of course, it was Brose and he is really wonderful and so understanding, just like my father.

. . . . . .

Naturally, our family suffered a sort of let-down after Alicia's marriage. Things were bound to seem a little dull after all that excitement and upheaval. But it was a rather nice sort of dullness. A bit of calm and quiet around the Heydon household would certainly be something in the nature of a novelty. Compared with last winter, when Janet and Toots had been staying with us, our house seemed practically empty with only four people living in it.

Of course, there were advantages, and I'd be the last one to deny them. I never had to wait for the shower any more. No one ever borrowed my best nylons without asking — and snagged a run in them! When the phone rang it was practically always for me. And Brose and I could play all his records any time he cared to bring them over without Alicia breaking in.

With the wedding out of the way I got seriously to work on sun-tanning, so that I'd have a good head start before we went up to Green Lake. We always go to our cottage there for the month of July, as that is when my father always takes his vacation.

Green Lake isn't swanky or anything, but it is a pleasant place and has the added advantage of being only about seventy-five miles from Edgewood. Ever so many people we know have cottages there, including the Gilmans and Barbie Walters' family. The Gilmans' cottage is next door to ours and they always come up in July, too. So Brose and I have a simply super time—at least, we always have had a simply super time.

How was I to know this summer was going to be so perfectly awful?

For one thing, our vacation plans were thrown out of gear at the start by Dad's having to make an unexpected business trip the last week in June. He thought he'd be home by the first of July, but he was proved wrong.

The rest of us would have gone to Green Lake without him and let him join us there, except for the fact that Mother developed some trouble with a wisdom tooth and had to stay in Edgewood to have it treated by the dentist. So what with one thing and another it was the eighth of July before we were off in a cloud of dust for Green Lake.

The Gilmans had gone on the first of the month as we had all planned to and I can tell you those eight days of waiting were hard on Midge and me. We moped around, feeling sorry for ourselves and getting in each other's hair generally. When we finally locked up the house and started off, our car loaded down with the usual assortment of summer paraphernalia, I heaved a blissful sigh, because all my troubles were over. That was what I thought!

I didn't even think anything when Brose didn't come over right away. It always takes hours and hours to clean up the cottage after it's been closed up for the winter. And since Brose must have gone through all that when the Gilmans first came to the lake, it seemed perfectly reasonable to me that he wouldn't want to get embroiled in another clean-up job.

We all pitched in, sweeping and scrubbing, brushing down cobwebs, making beds and generally getting the place presentable.

By late afternoon we had the cottage in good shape and I decided to go for a swim. Midge had sneaked off a half an hour or so before. Our parents were too exhausted to think of swimming. Dad was too exhausted to even think of fishing, before the next morning, that is. So I knew he was really tired.

I got into my new yellow bathing suit, grabbed up my bathing cap and started out.

Naturally, I detoured past the Gilmans' cottage to see Brose. I was beginning to feel just a little slighted. It seemed as though he might have risked coming over before this, even if he did hate housework and fear he might be roped into helping with some of our cleaning. Still, I didn't really hold it against him. So I went up the Gilmans' path and stood on their top step to peer in through the screen door.

Mr. and Mrs. Gilman were sitting exactly as my parents had been, with glasses of iced lemonade on a table between them. They had dozed off, so it seemed a shame to disturb them, since obviously Brose was nowhere around. Evidently he had already gone down to the beach. So I descended the steps on tiptoe and went on along the path that led to the lake.

I strolled cheerfully along, sniffing the nice wet familiar smell of the lake ahead. Then across a stretch of yellow sand, I glimpsed good old Green Lake itself, just as always. The little waves nibbled at the beach as though they liked the taste of it. A mile off shore the dark green of Gull Island looked like a big blob of spinach. A bunch of little kids, very shrill and skinny, were splashing in the shallow water. I was sure Midge was among them.

Farther out, around the white painted diving raft, a dozen or so friends of mine were swimming. They were mostly girls, as seems usually to be the case at summer resorts. There wasn't a sign of Brose anywhere.

Where was he, I wondered, frowning. And then, only a few feet from where I stood, I saw him.

Back at the very edge of the beach, where scrubby bushes cast a cool border of shade, there was Brose. He was lying on his tummy, his chin in his hands, gazing up soulfully at a girl who leaned against a bright canvas backrest. And what a girl!

Her hair was pale blond, like silver-gilt, and done in a soft long pageboy, with not a strand out of place. She was looking down at Brose, so I couldn't see the color of her eyes, but her lashes were terrific. She reminded me a little of several movie stars and none of them had a thing she didn't have and hers was displayed to super advantage in a sarong-type bathing suit with great splashy crimson poppies on a white ground.

She looked as though she hadn't been any nearer the water than she was right now—and didn't intend to get any nearer. Her skin was a soft creamy white like magnolia blossoms. And the proprietary, adoring way she was smiling down at Brose made my flesh creep.

I simply stood there, staring, with my mouth open like one of Dad's freshly landed fish. Something queer and painful was happening inside me. In vain I tried to reason with myself, reminding myself that I was blond, too, and that nobody had ever run shrieking at the sight of me—not in the opposite direction.

But it didn't do any good. There was something sinister about that girl's absolute perfection. And, somehow, I just couldn't bear to speak to Brose at that moment, when he was so utterly bewitched. Instead, I simply pretended I hadn't noticed him or the beautiful stranger.

I ran across the beach, waving and calling gaily to my friends in the water. I splashed in, buckling my bathing cap under my chin and trying not to gasp as the cold water hit me. I didn't pause—Brose just might be looking, although I couldn't count on it. I swam out to join the others with my very best crawl.

Everyone yelled cheerful greetings as I swam into the midst of the crowd around the diving-raft.

Barbie Walters hugged me and shrieked, "Tobey, we've missed you!"

Kay Lamb, another special friend of mine, said, "It isn't the same without you, Tobey."

"Oh, you just say that because it's true," I cracked.

But they had made me feel a little better. Now, with the old summer crowd all around me, I could have been quite happy and content if it hadn't been for the nagging thought of Brose, lying up there on the beach exposed to all that glamor. Not, of course, that I let any of the gang suspect for a moment that I wasn't happy and content.

We all swam around, laughing and splashing each other and yelling friendly insults back and forth. Finally, out of breath, I pulled myself up on to the raft and lay there, feeling the sunshine settle over my wetness like a warm overcoat. I pulled off my cap and let my damp hair fall forward over my face.

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After a minute or two someone plopped down beside me and I turned my head on my crossed arms to look up and see who it was. Barbie Walters grinned at me.

"Mind company?"

I shook my head.

Barbie took off her bathing cap and sat there, chewing the strap of it contemplatively. Barbie's hair looked like wet seaweed, the same as mine did, I imagined. Her tan was much deeper than mine, but she'd already been at the lake three weeks.

Barbie said, "I thought maybe you preferred to be alone with your sorrow."

Sometimes Barbie is almost too discerning.

"What sorrow?" I asked lightly. Or, at least, I hoped my tone sounded light.

Barbie and I were all alone on the raft at the moment. But she put her lips close to my ear in a very hush-hush manner to say, "You don't have to pretend with me, Tobey. You saw her, didn't you? You couldn't practically trip over Kentucky Jackson and not see her! Not with Brose panting at her feet!"

"Oh, you mean that girl," I said. "Did you say her name was—Kentucky?"

Barbie nodded. "Can you imagine it?"

"She's new, isn't she?" I asked.

"Not as new as the rest of us in one sense," Barbie said a trifle tartly. "She's twenty if she's a day, I'll bet. But she's new at the lake, if that's what you mean."

My heart sank. Where had I read that every man had to have at least one love affair with an older woman?

Barbie went on, "Unfortunately, there aren't any men her age around. So Kentucky's out for the boys in our crowd." Barbie is usually quite a tolerant person, but she sounded bitter now.

"Who is she staying with?" I asked.

"The Warrens. She's their niece and she's spending the summer here with them. So there isn't the slightest hope of getting rid of her."

"But surely," I objected, "if she's twenty, she can't be seriously interested in boys of seventeen."

"That's what you think!" Barbie said. "She's been here ever since we came to the lake three weeks ago, so I've had plenty of chance to observe her. She can be interested in anything that wears pants. Since the Gilmans came up, she's been working on Brose."

I tried to ignore the sinking sensation in the pit of my stomach. "She can't grab off all the boys here."

"Hah!" Barbie said without humor. "Take a look back there on the beach if you think she can't!"

I did so—and gulped. Brose was still stretched out at Kentucky Jackson's feet, but he had been joined in the last few minutes by Gil Forrester and Inky Stearns, who always used to be an inseparable foursome with Barbie and Kay, and a couple of other boys who must have slipped unobtrusively away from the crowd around the diving-raft.

I murmured weakly, "Her line must be super."

"Sugar," Barbie sniffed, "till it gags you! And all in the most terrific southern drawl. The boys eat it up."

"And that's not all," Kay Lamb clambered up on the raft beside us and jumped into the middle of the conversation with both feet. "She's a one-woman fashion show all the time. You know how it's always been at the lake, Tobey. We live in jeans or bathing suits and do our hair in pigtails to keep cool. And the boys didn't care, they didn't think anything of it. But now!"

Barbie took it up, "Kentucky's got them conditioned so they expect glamor from morning till night. She actually comes to beach picnics in white sharkskin slacks!"

"And she's got three bathing suits," Kay exclaimed, "not that she ever goes into the water! And she wouldn't dream of getting tanned—it coarsens the skin so, she says. She makes the rest of us look like a bunch of Indian squaws by comparison."

I jumped to my feet. I didn't know just what I was going to do, but it seemed to me the time had come for some sort of action. Barbie and Kay eyed me expectantly.

"Well, come on," I said. "Let's not just huddle around out here like a—an abandoned harem, or something! Let's swim back in and at least offer Kentucky a little competition."

Barbie and Kay and I swam back and trudged over to the shady edge of the beach where Kentucky Jackson was holding court. It looked as though all she lacked was a crown and sceptre. She was certainly surrounded by her loyal subjects.

Brose glanced up at me in astonishment. "Why, Tobey! When'd you get here?"

"Today," I told him. "Didn't you get my card?"

"Oh, is today Saturday?" he came out of his fog then sufficiently to introduce me to Kentucky Jackson.

KENTUCKY gave me a smile of absolutely dazzling sweetness and I saw that her eyes were a deep, soft, almost violet blue. How could anyone be so perfectly beautiful and live?

She drawled, "It's just wonderful meetin' you, Tobey, honey. I've heard so much about you from everyone."

Her accent was really something to hear. So far as Kentucky was concerned, the letter "r" might as well have been left out of the alphabet.

I murmured something appropriate and Barbie and Kay said hello to Kentucky, too, filling up an empty gap in the conversation.

None of the boys seemed to mind our joining them—or maybe they just didn't notice us. Even Brose's gaze wandered back to Kentucky, as though he hadn't the slightest control over it. I felt sick.

"Do sit down, darlings," she invited us graciously. "You must be simply exhausted after all that exertion." Her tone was so syrupy you could have eaten it on pancakes.

"I'm not a bit tired, thank you," I said, and stayed on my feet out of sheer defiance.

"Neither are we," Barbie and Kay echoed.

"I declare," Kentucky shook her head, so that her silver-gilt hair swung against her shoulders, "you northern girls are so energetic. I simply marvel at your endurance."

She made us sound as though we were constructed of cast iron, or something.

"Don't you swim?" I asked.

"Oh, I know how," Kentucky drawled. "But the sun's so scorchin'." She smiled directly at me again. "Brosie's been tellin' me what old friends you two are."

Brosie—I'd heard her say it with my own ears and he hadn't turned a hair. If I'd called him Brosie, he'd have tossed me into the lake.

I said, "Oh, yes, we've known each other a long while."

"You're so fortunate," Kentucky told me. "Here I've only known Brosie a little more than a week. Look at all the time I have to make up." She actually reached out and laid her hand on Brose's as she said that. And I thought for a moment he was going to purr.

How much flattery can a man stand, I wondered?

Finally I caught Brose's attention long enough to ask, "Aren't you going to swim at all?"

"Hun?" he asked blankly.

"Swim—you know?" I repeated. "In the water?"

He looked down at his bone-dry trunks and then up again a trifle sheepishly. "Oh, that's right, I haven't been in yet."

Kentucky smiled languorously at him. "It's so nice here in the shade, Brose, honey. Who wants to swim?"

I said, "It's what people usually go to the beach for."

"Not I," Kentucky said sweetly. "The water's so bad for a person's hair—makes it all stringy." Her blue glance just touched my hair.

I could have slapped her.

Brose said doubtfully, "The water looks good, though." He glanced my way. "Okay, Tobey. I'll race you to the raft."

As he got to his feet, I couldn't resist giving Kentucky a triumphant smile. But she was already starting to concentrate on Gil and Inky, so maybe she didn't notice.

We ran splashing into the water and swam out, with Brose pulling ahead and yelling back, "Come on . . . Get a little steam up . . . Don't go into reverse on me," and all sorts of amiable insults like that. It would have been just like old times if it weren't for Kentucky, lying back there on the beach, waiting to pounce on him again.

He reached the raft yards ahead of me and when I swam up, he accused, "You're out of practice, hag. Want some lessons?"

"Not from any beach-hound!" I sputtered.

"Who's a beach-hound?" Brose splashed water in my face and I splashed right back at him. That relieved my feelings a little.

"I'd like to know what else you call it."

"You kids just haven't learned the art of relaxation," Brose said loftily. "You kids—can you imagine? Putting himself in Kentucky Jackson's age bracket."

I glared at him. "You might try giving Kentucky swimming lessons. Maybe then she'd get her suit wet!"

"The idea's got possibilities," Brose said dreamily. "Maybe I will."

Before I could think up a cutting answer, he went on, "It's fun having someone new at the lake, don't you think? The same old crowd all the time gets a little dull."

"I do not!" I snapped. "I like the crowd just as it's always been."

"Oh, I like them too," Brose agreed. "We've always had fun. But with Kentucky around, it's just so much better."

That, I thought, was strictly a matter of opinion. But I didn't say so. I hate cats. Besides, I doubt whether Brose would have heard me, even if I had spoken. He was craning his neck to see what was going on back on the beach.

"C'mon, Tobey. I'll race you in," he said abruptly. And off he swam without even waiting to see whether I was following!

Naturally, when I reached the beach again, I stalked right on across it and up the path towards home. Brose Gilman, all the rest of the boys, could spend the entire summer at Kentucky Jackson's feet, so far as I was concerned. But I wasn't going to hover around and watch!

Back at our cottage I dressed defiantly in blue jeans and T-shirt and did my hair in pigtails. After dinner Midge and I did the dishes, because our mother was so tired. Midge couldn't wait to get through to rush out to join her friends again. I didn't feel in any

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special hurry, so I did an elegant job of sink cleaning and even rinsed out the tea towels afterwards.

When I finally finished I went outside and sat on the back steps awhile, watching the sunset. There was an old tennis ball lying on the ground, so I got up and began bouncing it lackadaisically against the porch railing.

Pretty soon Barbie and Kay appeared. They were wearing playsuits I hadn't seen before, very pretty and new-looking. They had even managed to get their hair to curl a little bit since our swim.

"Traitors!" I said.

Kay blushed, but Barbie said firmly, "You were the one who said we ought to give her a little competition."

"I changed my mind," I explained, and bounced the tennis ball hard against the porch railing several times. "Why should I spoil my vacation coaxing her, dressing up like a—a window dummy, or something? If people don't like me the way I am, the way I've always been, they just needn't like me, that's all!"

Barbie insisted, "It won't do a bit of good to act like this, Tobey. Dress any way you please, but don't waste your time moping around alone, thinking Brose will come hunting you."

Kay put in, "We both tried being stand offish when Gil and Inky first went for her, but they didn't even notice."

Barbie said wistfully, "We'd have tried to make them jealous—only there weren't enough other boys around."

The shortage of teenage males at Green Lake is always fairly acute, but it had never bothered me before because I'd always had Brose. And men Kentucky's age are even more scarce. Apparently she already had found that out.

"What burns me up," I exploded, "is that the big dopes haven't enough sense to realise she's only using them because there aren't any older fellows available. Why, I'll bet if anyone over twenty turned up—"

Kay sighed, interrupting, "We know that. We tried telling Gil and Inky so, too, but they didn't believe us."

"The male ego, you know?" Barbie said sarcastically. "She has every last one of them convinced that he's the one she really likes best. Don't ask me how she does it."

"Flattery," Kay suggested. "And the way she looks at them — as though they're simply terrif. It's sickening, but all the boys love it. I don't think she could get away with it, though, without that southern accent. I mean, it would sound perfectly silly, coming from us."

"I'm not going to try to copy her," I said sharply. "As for Brose and Gil and Inky, they can do anything they like. I don't care what they do!"

"It's what you're going to do that matters," Barbie said sensibly. "If you're smart, you'll do like Kay and me, simply make the best of things."

I asked warily, "You mean get all palsy-walsy with Kentucky?"

"Not necessarily," Kay said. "But at least be civil to her. Then the crowd can go on doing things together, hiking and playing tennis and swimming—"

"Kentucky doesn't swim," I pointed out.

"She doesn't want to do anything that would get her mussed up," Barbie agreed. "But so long as the hikes aren't too long and there's a shady spot for her to hold court in while the rest of us swim or play tennis—"

"What a dumb way to spend a vacation!" I burst out.

"Not so dumb as—for instance—bouncing tennis balls around all by yourself," Kay said pityingly.

I saw what she meant . . .

So that was the way my vacation started out—the vacation I'd looked forward to for weeks, that I'd thought was going to be just as much fun as other summers. And things didn't get any better, either. We all took little easy hikes, with Kentucky in glamorous play-clothes and Barbie and Kay and me defiant in blue jeans.

Occasionally we were able to beguile the boys into a good hot set of tennis, provided there was a shaded deck-chair nearby for Kentucky to loll in. We swam, with the boys tearing themselves away now and then from Kentucky, who reclined on the beach under a sun umbrella. It was perfectly putrid!

My family didn't realise anything was wrong. Dad fished every day and sunburned his nose as usual. Midge swam and built sand castles. Mother had lots of friends at the lake, so she had fun playing bridge and swimming and reading books.

Of course, they all met Kentucky, but just seeing our crowd around together, they had no idea what a fly in the ointment that southern menace was. In fact, all the older people at the lake thought her perfectly charming, including my parents. Funny, how undiscerning people get after they're forty.

Since Kentucky slept late, I did get Brose to myself sometimes in the early morning. But even when we were alone things weren't the way they used to be.

One day I accused him, when we were sitting on our back steps after breakfast, "You act like a zombie or something when Kentucky isn't around! Snap out of it, stupid!"

Brose brought his wandering attention back from some far distance. His tone was reproachful. "Why do you girls always pick on Kentucky? She thinks you're sweet kids, all of you. She often says so."

"Kids!" I exploded. "She makes us sound around six years old—and not very bright!"

Brose shook his head. "Kentucky says girls never understand her. That's why she prefers the company of men."

"Men! Does she pretend to consider you and Gil and Inky men? Why, she's old enough to be your aunt, or something!"

Brose leaned his elbows on his knees and stared dreamily into space. "What's a year or two difference in age? Besides, I seem older—as old as the average college senior."

"She told you that, too, I suppose?"

"Why, yes, she did."

I JUMPED up. Suddenly I couldn't bear it, seeing Brose, of whom I am very fond, make a complete fool of himself over someone who didn't really appreciate his finer qualities at all. How can men be so blind?

I said, "If you ask me, you aren't even acting as old as a high-school senior! More like eighth grade. I'd say. You're being such a dope!"

He didn't even get mad. That sort of scared me. Didn't anything I said make the slightest difference to him any more?

He got to his feet and stood there, regarding me with a sort of pitying condescension that made me see red. And then, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, he reached into his pocket and pulled out a pipe.

My mouth dropped open. "Brose! You don't smoke?"

He cradled the pipe bowl in his fingers caressingly as he shook his head. "Not yet. I promised my parents I wouldn't till I'm eighteen. But Kentucky loves to see a man with a pipe, so I just bought it to carry around, to get the feel of—"

I broke in, "I think that's the silliest thing I ever heard of! I think you're nuts!" And with that I turned and rushed into the house, slamming the screen door after me.

I didn't dare look back. Because I knew that if Brose was standing there, staring after me with that pipe in his hand, I'd throw something at him. Or else I'd burst into tears. And that would be worse—much worse!

Even though I wasn't having much fun, time passed very quickly at Green Lake. There are always so many things to do, I suppose it's bound to seem as though there aren't enough hours in the day. Even with Kentucky Jackson casting a pall over all our crowd's activities, still we kept so busy I didn't have much opportunity to brood.

When the day came for Kay and Barbie to go home, I felt pretty sunk. I'd known all along they'd be going back to Edgewood before I did. Still it was hard to face their going, as we had sort of lent each other moral support in our troubles with Kentucky.

Kay didn't feel too badly about leaving, as Tony Storm' family was going at the same time and I guess she thought she could get things back on the old basis between them once he was away from Kentucky's influence. And Barbie didn't mind, either, because once she was home she'd have Sox Trevor again and Sox had never even heard of Kentucky, except as a state.

"Chin up, old girl, and all that sort of rot," Barbie counselled staunchly in farewell.

And Kay added, "At least you can be thankful Kentucky doesn't live in Edgewood. You can make Brose forget her once you get home."

Somehow their words weren't as comforting as they meant them to be. I didn't want to have to make Brose forget anybody. I didn't want him to like me best in Edgewood simply because another girl wasn't there.

With Barbie and Kay and Inky gone, our crowd had shrunk to four. Just Kentucky and Brose and Gil Forrester and I were left. I was getting more and more bitter over the fact that my whole vacation had been a miserable flop and it was all Kentucky's fault. Well, it was Brose's fault, too, of course; still, I felt Kentucky was to blame.

And then, out of my rankling resentment, an idea sprang full-fledged. It was just like it had been the day I thought of locking Alicia and Adam in the library so they'd have to make up and get married. I saw it all clearly, in every detail, and I was only sorry I hadn't thought of it before the others left.

I didn't breathe a word of my plan to anyone, and keeping it all bottled up inside made me feel like a champagne bottle just before the cork pops out. But I managed to conceal my excitement.

One afternoon at the beach I suggested innocently that we hadn't had any moonlight picnics at Gull Island.

"So we haven't," Brose agreed.

Gil piped up, "Why don't we have one tonight, just the four of us?"

And even Kentucky said it sounded like fun.

"We can take hot dogs and stuff. There's always plenty of driftwood for a fire," Brose went on.

"And maybe have a moonlight swim," said Gil.

Kentucky shivered daintily. "That doesn't appeal to me, but the rest sounds wonderful. I just adore moonlight picnics."

It scared me a little, the enthusiastic way they all fell in with my suggestion. As though it were fate, or something. I said, "We could paddle out in Gil's canoe," and held my breath to see whether there'd be any objection to that.

But there wasn't. They all thought

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that was a swell idea, too. It looked as though my scheme wasn't going to encounter a single snag. I couldn't have been happier.

We started out a little before eight o'clock. It was a hot, still evening, with a sort of breathlessness in the air. Or maybe that was just my own secret excitement. As Gil paddled we all joked and laughed and sang songs. Kentucky sat just ahead of me, trailing a lily-white hand in the water. Gil and Brose and I wore jeans and T-shirts over our bathing suits. But not Kentucky — in a lemon-yellow slack suit, she looked like a fashion ad. As usual, not a curl of her silver-gilt hair was out of place. But tonight I took a sort of fiendish pleasure in her perfection.

When we were within ten yards or so of the island, I went into sudden action.

"Look, kids!" I cried, leaping to my feet and pointing. "Isn't that a heron right over there in those trees?"

Gil's canoe lurched crazily under my tricky footwork. He grabbed for me and missed. I saw to that.

Brose yelled, "Sit down, dope!"

Kentucky just screamed.

Then splash!—the canoe went over and we were all thrashing around in the water. I had never realised before how easy it is to capsize a canoe. And, I prided myself, it must have looked perfectly accidental.

As I had known, the lake was only about four feet deep at this point. I touched bottom easily and looked around. Brose and Gil were obviously touching bottom, too, but Kentucky hadn't bothered to find out how deep the water was. She had simply reached out in a panic and grabbed the nearest man—thank goodness, it was Gil!—and was hanging on to him for dear life, yelling her head off.

Gil managed to break that headlock of hers before he choked. He gasped reassuringly, "You can't drown here, Kentucky—it's all right—we can wade ashore—"

Brose began to laugh and I felt relief nibble at me. He was hanging on to the boat so it wouldn't get away. He said, "Tobey, you dope, don't you know better than to jump around in a canoe like that? But we look so funny—"

"Funny!" Kentucky spluttered. The look she gave me would have shrivelled anyone who wasn't too wet to shrivel. She exclaimed furiously, trying to push the plastered hair back from her face, "Of all the clumsy, stupid things I ever saw, Tobey Heydon—"

"I'm sorry," I fibbed. "I just didn't think."

"Sorry!" She glared at me and opened her mouth to say more.

But Brose interrupted, "There's no use fighting about it now. Let's get ashore and make a fire and dry out our clothes."

"All the food's lost," I said, feeling a qualm of guilt. Still there was something very gratifying about the sight of Kentucky, standing there, so furious, with her clothes and hair soaked.

Gil said, "Give me a hand, Brose, and we'll pull the canoe up on shore."

Suddenly a funny look came into Brose's face. He demanded, "Gil, where's the paddle?"

"Paddle?" Gil gulped, a wild gleam in his eye. "Oh, my gosh! I had it when we started to tip—then when we went over, Kentucky grabbed me and—and I must've dropped it — it must have floated off—"

We all began to look around desperately, but there was no sign of the paddle.

I said, and this time I wasn't fibbing, "Golly, I am sorry! It's all my fault."

"Of course it is, you little dimwit!" Kentucky snapped. And then managing to inject a little honey into her tone, she said, "Oh, Brose, this is dreadful! I'm so glad you and Gil are here to take care of us."

"We'll take care of everybody," Brose said.

We finally got a fire made, although it wasn't easy with damp matches, and we huddled around it, drying our clothes as best we could. To my utter surprise, after the first shock Kentucky cheered up. Her slacks would never look the same, but her hair, to my astonishment and pain, proved to be naturally curly. And so she really managed to look better than I did.

Brose looked at me curiously. "What's the matter, Tobey? You worried?"

"Of course not. Why should I be worried?" I couldn't very well admit I was feeling snappish because my lovely scheme for showing up Kentucky in a bad light seemed to have backfired.

Gil said, "When we aren't home by a reasonable hour, someone'll come out to look for us."

"Of course," Kentucky said, smiling sweetly. "It's really rather an adventure, don't you think?"

THE last thing I had expected was for Kentucky to take our predicament like that. I sat near the fire, my chin on my knees, feeling glum and empty and chilled. And then, to top things off, it became apparent that nature was going to take a hand. I realised that the wind had come up and the sky was darkly overcast.

Suddenly there was a long, threatening rumble of thunder. Lightning streaked down the sky and I let out a low moan. If there is anything that scares me to death it's a storm. And here I was, going to be caught out in one. It was almost like a judgment.

"Oooooh," Kentucky said, her voice all thrilled. "It's going to storm."

She actually sounded as though she were happy about it.

Gil said, "Yes. We'd better get back under the trees."

"Wait till it starts to rain," Kentucky breathed. "There's something so splendid about storms. I love to watch them."

Hadn't I heard somewhere that trees attracted lightning? There was another growl of thunder and a bright ominous flash. I put my face down on my knees and shut my eyes tight.

"What's wrong with her?" Kentucky sounded amused.

But suddenly someone sat down beside me and I felt an arm go comfortingly around my shoulders. I looked up and there was Brose. He was grinning down at me, but his eyes were gentle and somehow I wasn't nearly so scared. I burrowed my head against his shoulder and the thunder didn't seem so loud, nor the lightning so blinding.

"Take it easy, baby," he said, very low. "Someone'll come out for us sooner than ever if it storms. They'll know it wouldn't be safe for us to paddle back in a canoe . . . ."

Well, of course he was right. The storm had hardly got under way when my father and Mr. Warren picked us up in the Warrens' motor launch. So here I am, two days later, sitting up in bed and getting over my cold and writing down all the details in my diary. And I must say it's a drippy way to finish up a vacation. Especially since Kentucky told everyone that I tipped the canoe over on purpose. And even my own parents believed her and were terribly angry with me.

And my cold's been so bad, Mother hasn't let me have any visitors, so I haven't even seen Brose. Although maybe I wouldn't have seen him anyway—maybe he doesn't want to see me after the exhibition I made of myself that night on Gull Island.

It's funny, but just after I finished writing the above, I heard Brose calling me softly outside the window. So I put on my chintz housecoat with the yellow roses on it and a yellow ribbon around my hair and just a smidgin of powder on my nose because it is still a little pink. Then I went over to the window and Brose and I had a long talk. And he is really wonderful, probably the most wonderful and understanding man in the world.

The first thing he said was, "Tobey, I just had to see you whether you're supposed to have visitors or not. You don't think it'll make you any worse, do you?"

"Of course not, Brose," I told him. "I'm feeling much better. But you know how mothers are about colds."

"But I wouldn't want you to have a relapse. Still I just had to see you. I had to tell you I think it was very low of Kentucky to go around saying you tipped the canoe on purpose. I know it was an accident."

I felt awful, but all I could gulp was, "Do you, Brose?"

"Why, sure. And another thing," he sounded terribly in earnest. "You were right about her all along."

"I was?" I asked in surprise. "But—she was really grand that night on the island—when I went all to pieces."

"That's not what I mean," Brose said. "The thing is you were r'ght about her just killing time with Gil and Inky and me till someone her own age came along."

This was almost more than I'd dared hope for. I stared at Brose through the window screen and his expression was scornful.

"The Warrens let her ask a friend up," he went on. "He got here the morning after the beach picnic and he's twenty-five and none of our crowd has seen Kentucky since he came. She doesn't pay the slightest attention to us."

I couldn't say "I told you so." I felt too sorry for Brose.

But somehow he didn't sound as disillusioned as I expected, adding, "I for one don't care what she does. I even threw away that fool pipe."

"Did you, Brose?" My heart was beating faster.

"Sure." He stared at me through the screen. "All I'm worried about is whether you'll forgive me for being such a dope. Will you forgive me, Tobey?"

After all I'd been through I should have held out a little longer. But I didn't. I murmured, "Oh, Brose, of course I will."

"Tobey, that's swell of you, after I acted like I did. I actually don't know what I saw in her. She isn't half as pretty as you—nor as sweet—"

I simply couldn't stand having him think so well of me when I didn't deserve it. I blurted out, "Brose—don't! Kentucky was right about my tipping the canoe on purpose. It was—awful of me—but I was so mad at her, being so beautiful and perfect—and I just couldn't let her have you without a struggle."

I was looking down at my clasped hands, but I simply had to risk a glance at him to see how he was taking my confession. And one glance was all I needed. I knew then that it was all right, everything was all right. Brose didn't look angry at all, he looked flattered!

. . . . . .

After we got home from Green Lake the rest of the summer was lovely. The only trouble was, it went too

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fast. Brose and I saw a lot of each other, played tennis, went on bike hikes, took in a good many movies. Nothing was really changed between us, in spite of the Kentucky affair. We both agreed not to discuss that any more, or even to think about it, and I believe that was the best course.

Of course, nobody's life is absolutely perfect and I won't say mine is. It used to be Alicia who got in my hair. Now that she's only home for an occasional visit, we get along quite well. I think marriage has really mellowed Alicia and she is absolutely crazy about Adam, which seems to have made her disposition much better than it used to be. Now the monkey-wrench in the machinery of my life is my kid sister Midge.

Maybe something drastic happens to girls around her age, something they can't help. This would certainly be the kindest view of the matter. All I know is, my little sister had gone on for years, being no more of a blight than all little sisters are. But now, practically overnight it seemed, Midge's whole personality curdled.

And as if that wasn't bad enough, she developed a terrific friendship with another little punk named Judy Allen. And what Midge didn't think of, Judy did, and vice versa.

The Allens had just moved to Edgewood that summer and they lived several blocks away from us, so I didn't know any of the family but Judy. She was a big-eyed little kid with almost as many freckles on her nose as Midge had. Her hair was dark and she wore it in a sort of shaggy page-boy, tied back from her face with a ribbon that was usually coming untied.

But it wasn't her looks I objected to, it was the absolutely devastating effect she and Midge had on each other. They were like two chemicals, harmless enough in themselves, which added together created something only a little less deadly than TNT.

I don't know whose idea it was to experiment with my private hoard of creams and lipsticks and stuff, but both of them did it. I wasn't sure whether my dressing-table would ever look the same afterwards. They smeared my favorite nail-polish as high as their second knuckles. But the crowning blow was the day shortly after school started in September, when I came in and actually caught Midge and Judy reading my diary!

After the calling down I gave them, I didn't think they were likely to try anything like that again. But just to be doubly sure, I began hiding the diary under my mattress. I complained to my parents, too, but I didn't get anything like proper co-operation from them.

Dad chuckled, "What you lack is perspective, Tobey."

I looked at him blankly.

Mother explained, smiling a little, "You see, dear, this isn't the first time your father and I have had to cope with this situation."

"But it's only just lately Midge has got to be such a perfect little blight," I said.

Dad shook his head. "It's not Midge we're talking about."

And Mother added, "A few years back your older sisters found you just as annoying as you find Midge."

I answered coldly, "I was never like that—never!"

But I could see plainly neither of them believed me.

Brose proved a more sympathetic audience when I confided in him the trouble I was having with Midge.

"Sisters!" He shook his head. "They must be a pain all right."

"If you had any you'd know what a pain," I told him glumly.

Midge seemed to grow steadily worse as time went on. She and Judy developed a burning interest in "lovelorn" columns in the newspaper. They pored over articles on how to manage your love life and then Midge tried to give me advice. As if I needed any help in that direction!

Mother said placatingly, "If you'll just bear with her, darling. I'm sure she'll get over it. These phases pass."

"Bear with her!" I exclaimed. "Isn't it enough she and Judy stick their little freckled noses into my cosmetics and clothes and even my diary? Now do I have to stand for their advice and interference in my private affairs?"

My mother sighed. "Sometimes I think it's going to be wonderful when all of you are grown up. And then again I wonder if it won't be a little dull."

"I could stand a little dullness myself," I said.

One day Midge was having a light afternoon snack of chocolate cake and olives and milk in the kitchen when I came in, bent on pressing my pleated skirt. I shuddered at the revolting repast spread before her and merely helped myself to an olive.

"How," I inquired with sisterly regard for what, I hoped, would some day be her waistline, "can you gorge yourself so?"

Midge said, "Hmmmm?" absently without lifting her eyes.

It was then I saw she had the evening paper on her lap folded open at the love-advice column. This is run by a quaint character named Aunt Flora, who is nothing short of an oracle of wisdom in Midge's eyes and those of her friend, Judy, too. I didn't bother to repeat my remark. Instead I set up the ironing-board and got busy.

Presently Midge spoke thoughtfully, "Tobey, you know what's wrong with you and Brose?"

I MERELY sighed and went on ironing. There is practically no use trying to stop Midge when she has just finished reading Aunt Flora. Maybe if I ignored her, though, she'd dry up.

She didn't. She went on solemnly, "You let him take you for granted, but it's a mistake not to keep a man guessing."

"No!" I said.

Sarcasm was wasted on Midge. "Yes, it is. Aunt Flora says so. Especially during the early stages of an association between a young lady and gentleman."

I pointed out, "Brose and I have known each other five years."

"Well, yes," Midge admitted, "but you're not married, yet, or engaged or anything. So you're still in the early stages."

If I had known it was next to impossible for Midge to keep a secret, I might have informed her that in just a matter of weeks, when Brose got his class ring, I would be wearing it. And even though that wasn't an engagement, it was pretty serious and important.

Instead I said merely, "Did I ask your advice, squirt? Or Aunt Flora's, either?"

After quite a long interval of silence, Midge said, "Hmmm?" again absently, so I knew she'd gone back to her reading.

I finished my skirt, put the ironing things away and helped myself to just a smidgin of cake. I'd got as far as the hall when I remembered an important errand I had to do.

"Hey, twirp," I called to Midge, "I'm going to take my coat down to the tailor's to get it lengthened."

After a while my sister's voice came faintly from the kitchen, "Hmmm?"

I had my coat out by that time and was on my way. "Going to the tailor's," I called back and shut the front door behind me.

I wouldn't have been away more than half an hour, if I hadn't happened to meet some girls I knew as I came out of the tailor's shop. We decided to have sundaes as we were all simply starving. Isn't it ironic to think how one thing in life hinges on another? If it hadn't been for those sundaes, I'd have got home before Brose phoned and none of the subsequent ghastly developments would have developed.

Anyway, I ate my chocolate marshmallow nut sundae all unknowing. We even lingered longer than usual, because we were discussing the Heart Hop and that is a very delectable topic of conversation.

The Heart Hop is a dance which is given every year in October by one of the girls' clubs at high school. It is terribly splash and everyone gets new formals and has a super time. But the big difference is that the girls invite the boys, which, for once, gives us the privilege of picking instead of being picked.

Not, of course, that I had any intention of asking anyone but Brose. In fact, all the girls seemed to take it for granted that I must have already asked him, so I didn't tell them I hadn't actually got around to doing it yet.

"Just think," Kay Lamb drooled ecstatically, "it's less than two weeks off."

Barbie Walters gloated, "I'm glad I've got a man all spoken for. Nobody's left now but a few ghouls."

"Me, too," Kay echoed. "I asked Inky ages ago."

Barbie nodded sagely. "We really don't appreciate how lucky we are. Why, Mary Andrews admitted to me she's almost desperate because she hasn't got anyone yet for the Hop. And look how cute she is."

Even with all that portentous conversation on the subject, I didn't suffer a single qualm of foreboding. After all, Brose knew I'd ask him, even if I hadn't got around to it yet. Hadn't I always asked him to the Heart Hop?

But little did I realise what a super sabotage job my little sister was doing to my long-standing relationship with Brose practically that very minute.

. . . . . .

Midge had gone over to Judy's to play when I got home. Not that I paid any particular attention to her whereabouts. I wrote in my diary, did my nails and decided I'd mention the Heart Hop to Brose the next day.

It was only as she was ready to start up to bed that Midge got around to informing me, "Oh, Tobey, I nearly forgot. Brose called you this afternoon."

"Well, fine!" I exclaimed with justifiable sarcasm. "Just tell me about these things any time!"

We were alone in the hall. My mother was writing to Janet in the library and Dad was playing records. It struck me that Midge had picked this particular time to tell me about Brose's call, instead of blurting it out in front of everybody, which would have been more like her.

"What did he want?" I asked, "if it isn't too much trouble."

My sister twisted the end of one of her sandy pigtails around her fingers. She seems to imagine this will eventually make her hair curl, although it certainly hasn't had any effect so far. "He—uh—didn't say."

It struck me that Midge was acting very oddly.

"Look," I said sternly, "let's begin at the beginning. What did he say and what did you say? And no funny business!"

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Midge gulped. "Well, he asked where you were. And I thought it wouldn't hurt him to get a little jealous. It's never a good idea to let a man be too sure of you, Aunt Flora says, because then they—"

"Leave Aunt Flora out of this," I cut in grimly. "What did you tell Brose?"

"Well," my sister tried to hedge, "I knew you prob'ly wouldn't want me to tell him, but I just told him what you said when you left, that you were going out with some boy named Taylor."

"Taylor?" I repeated stupidly.

Midge's eyes widened in genuine astonishment. "That was what you said, Tobey—wasn't it?"

Going out with someone named Taylor, going to the tailor with a coat—I suppose they do sound alike to a person intent on reading advice to the lovelorn. But I wasn't in any mood at the moment to be forbearing.

"You little dope!" I berated her. "I wasn't out with anyone! I took my coat to the tailor and that was exactly what I told you! If you'd listen . . ."

Midge sniffed ominously and I knew she was all set to start bellowing, which would probably bring our parents down on us and only complicate matters further.

"Stop it!" I commanded in a low but stern voice. "I'll call him back and explain. But next time don't go garbling my messages."

With that I left her and went to phone Brose.

His mother answered. She seemed a little surprised when I asked if he was home. "Why, Tobey, didn't he go to the movies with you?"

I felt a swooping sensation in my tummy. "Why, no," I gulped.

"Well—I guess he must have gone alone then—or with one of the boys." I could tell Mrs. Gilman was just trying to be tactful. "Shall I tell him to call you when he gets home?"

"Never mind," I said, "I'll see him at school tomorrow. It can wait till then."

I thanked her and hung up. It was perfectly apparent that Brose had taken some other girl to the movies. His mother had just assumed it was I, because he usually did take me. The swooping sensation in my tummy grew worse. But before I fell asleep I had reasoned myself into a calmer frame of mind. After all, I could explain everything to him in the morning . . .

When I encountered Brose at school next day it was in the hall near the lockers. I thought for a minute he was simply going to pass me by with just a cool, "Hi, hag."

"Look, tall, handsome, and hot-headed," I teased with my very most winning smile. "Doesn't the condemned even get a chance to defend herself?"

"It's a free country," Brose said, his arms crossed and his chin sort of jutting forward. "You can go out with anyone you please, even perfect strangers named Taylor. But it works both ways."

I shook my head. "It's all just a silly misunderstanding cooked up by my poisonous little sister."

"I suppose you don't even know anybody named Taylor," Brose said nastily.

I let that ride and went on to explain exactly where I had been the previous afternoon when he phoned.

"You were—at the tailor's?" Brose repeated blankly when I had finished.

"If you doubt my word, Mr. D.A. I kidded him, "you can check my alibi with Barbie or Kay or Liz. We all had chocolate—"

"Wait!" There was a stricken look on Brose's face. One of the things I like best about him, he's always appalled to find himself in the wrong and he doesn't hesitate to admit it.

I stood there, smiling up at him, waiting for the apology that was sure to come. But instead of apologising, Brose croaked in a tone of utter dismay, "But, Tobey, gee whiz, if you weren't out with some other guy . . . Well, gosh, it's this way . . . Uh — you see—I felt so bad when Midge told me that, I took Mary Andrews to the movies."

"That's oke," I said magnanimously, although I wished it might have been anyone but Mary. "After all, how were you to know Midge had been listening in on the wrong wave length?"

Brose was dragging at the neck of his sport shirt as though it choked him. "Tobey, gosh, this is awful! The thing is . . . Well, you see, when Mary invited me to take her to the Heart Hop—well—I figured you could just go with your new friend Taylor. So I—I said, 'yes'."

Now I know what they mean in stories when they say people felt as though they'd been turned into ice. Brose—he couldn't do this to me!

I think I smiled. At least, I felt my lips sort of part. And I managed to say quite casually, "Why, that's all right, Brose."

He stared at me. "It is?"

"Why, yes." I actually achieved an airy little laugh. "You see, I—I've been wondering how to break it to you—but I've already invited someone else to the Hop."

THANK goodness, the bell rang just then and I was able to dash for class, leaving Brose gazing blankly after me. I couldn't have kept up that ghastly pretence much longer.

The rest of the day passed in a kind of dull, aching void. I was grateful nobody, even my closest friends, knew the full extent of my predicament. I hadn't actually told anyone I was going to ask Brose to the dance. So all I had to do was think of someone else to invite—but that was the stumbling block.

A quick desperate survey of the field showed me Barbie had been absolutely right yesterday when she said no one was left but a few ghouls. My thoughts cringed away from the sorry specimens. I had to find someone outside of the high school crowd. But where?

My mind grew groggy in the next couple of days, going around in circles. Friends were beginning to press me as to whom I had invited to the Hop, especially since Mary Andrews hadn't wasted any time about letting everyone know she was going with Brose. I couldn't play mysterious about my plans indefinitely. Already Barbie Walters was a little hurt because still I wouldn't tell her whom I had invited.

And then, right in the midst of my desperation, an idea hit me. Really, it's sort of wonderful, I think, the way I get ideas just when things look blackest. The whole thing was really so simple it scared me.

I didn't actually have to go to the Heart Hop with anyone! So long as I dreamed up a really impressive boy to tell Barbie and Kay and the rest of my girl-friends about, who would be the wiser if my dream man sprained his ankle or something on the very eve of the dance?

Of course, it would be a disappointment not to go to the Hop. But I hadn't done anything drastic like getting a new dress for it yet. My pride would be saved, at any rate. And, after all, I wasn't in any position to quibble.

I worked out all the details in the privacy of my diary. This was a scheme of considerably more magnitude than I had ever undertaken before. Every angle had to be plotted in advance, so I wouldn't run any risk of tripping myself up.

My first step was to invent a boy named Jon Hayward. I have always loved the name Jon with no 'h' in it and have never met anyone whose parents were considerate enough to call him that. I picked the last name by shutting my eyes and jabbing my finger at a page in the phone book. With that settled my next step was to figure out a place for Jon to be from.

This was most important. He couldn't be from Edgewood, but on the other hand, it wouldn't be plausible to have him from too far away. I finally decided to have Jon live in Whitfield, which is only about twenty miles from our town. Moreover, we have relatives there, so it would seem reasonable to suppose he was someone I had met when visiting Aunt Louise.

When I calmly announced one night at dinner that I was going to the Heart Hop with Jon Hayward of Whitfield, my family swallowed this myth hook, line, and sinker. Their calm acceptance of my statement made me feel a little ashamed, but I kept my fingers crossed under the table all the time I was discussing Jon, so it didn't seem quite so much as though I were telling whoppers.

Dad said mildly, "If he's someone Louise knows, he must be all right."

And mother said, "Of course he's all right or Tobey wouldn't have invited him to the dance, would you, dear?" A slight frown wrinkled her forehead. "But—what about Brose? Won't he be expecting you to go with him?"

Midge said solemnly, "It's a mistake to let a man get too sure of you. Aunt Flora says so. Aunt Flora—"

"And who," my father inquired, "is Aunt Flora?"

Midge fixed him with an appalled stare. "You mean you've never heard of Aunt Flora?"

"She writes a revolting column on love problems," I supplied. "And I'm getting pretty sick of hearing about her second-hand. Midge is forever quoting her."

Midge said, "That's a fine way for you to talk! Why, if it wasn't for me telling you how Aunt Flora says women shouldn't let men take them for granted, you'd prob'ly just be going to the Heart Hop with Brose instead of getting yourself a brand-new man with a romantic sounding name like Jon Hayward."

"Is that so?" I began hotly.

But my father interrupted, chuckling, "Now, kids, take it easy. Nothing to fight about that I can see. You were going to say something more about the dance, Tobey?"

I shook my head. "No, that was all I was going to say."

Dad and mother exchanged wondering looks.

Dad asked, "No requests, suggestions, hints along the line of not having a thing to wear but some terrible old rag you've worn at least twice before?"

"Oh—oh, you mean about a formal." I laughed casually. "I think my yellow one will do very well for the Heart Hop. You see Jon hasn't taken me to a dance before, so any dress I wear will be new to him."

My father stared at me. "Is this my child speaking, my little Tobey, implying that she doesn't need a new dress?"

Mother said doubtfully, as though she couldn't quite believe the evidence of her own ears, "But that's so sensible of you, dear."

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"Well—everybody has to get sensible some time," I said, not very brightly . .

I felt a little guilty over fooling my parents, but there simply was no other way out of the dilemma.

Next day I confided to Barbie that I was going to the Hop with Jon.

"So that's what all the mystery's been about," she exclaimed, her dark eyes shining excitedly behind her harlequin glasses. "An absolutely new man—one who doesn't even live here, that none of your friends has even seen. How super!"

"I'd have told you sooner," I explained, "but I had to find out for absolutely sure he could come first."

Barbie stared dreamily into space. "A man named Jon — I've always wanted to meet one. Without an 'h,' I mean. Aren't you just thrilled, Tobey?"

I nodded.

"No wonder you didn't care when Mary asked Brose—" she broke off to stare at me questioningly. "This doesn't mean you and Brose are all washed up, does it?"

"Oh, no. Brose and I are still friends—very good friends. But—" I shrugged. "I'd never want to make the mistake of letting a man feel too sure of me." I colored a little, realising how close I had come to quoting Aunt Flora. "Besides," I hurried on, "we aren't engaged or anything really serious. There's no reason either of us isn't perfectly free to go out with someone else."

Barbie nodded thoughtfully. Then she asked, "What's he like—this Jon? He sounds dreamy!"

I crossed my fingers tight. "Well, he's tall—and not too heavy, but his shoulders are nice and broad."

"Football?" Barbie asked interestedly.

"You know, I never asked him."

Barbie nodded. "I'll just bet he plays. Is he dark?"

"N-no, sort of blond, with nice blue eyes," I elaborated shamelessly.

Barbie sighed deeply. "Tell me more."

"That's all I'm going to tell you," I said. "Wait till the hop and you can see him for yourself."

"Jeepers," Barbie murmured raptly, "and I'm only going with Sox! You're lucky!"

Of course, it took practically no time for all the rest of my friends to hear about Jon. News like that travels fast. Sometimes I almost caught myself believing he was real, just as I'd convinced everyone else he was. And then I'd remember and realise this would be the first Heart Hop I'd missed since I'd been in high school. And I'd feel pretty glum.

Brose happened to catch up with me on the stairs at school during one of my low moments.

"I'd give you a penny for 'em," he cracked, "but it might help bring on inflation."

"Oh, hi, Brose," I said, unable at the moment to think of a snappy answer.

We stood there on the stairs for a minute just looking at each other.

Brose said, his voice a little husky, "Tobey—I hear you're going to the dance with some guy from Whitfield."

I nodded. "And you're going with Mary Andrews, remember?"

Brose said unhappily, "Well, of course, I hope you'll have a swell time—I hope I will, too—" He broke off, then finished in a kind of rush, "But I wish we were going together."

My heart jumped. But I said coolly, "Better not let Mary hear you say a thing like that."

Brose asked, "At least save me a dance, will you, Tobey?"

"If I have any to spare," I told him and went on down the stairs and left him standing there.

Honestly, life is so complicated sometimes.

A few days before the dance my father had to go to Cleveland on a business trip. The night before he left he and my mother came into the library where I was sort of half-heartedly doing my homework. There were wide smiles on both their faces and Dad was carrying a big flat box with Sandra's Frocks printed on the cover. I stared at it a little blankly, my heart skipping a beat, because Sandra's is my very most favorite dress shop in all Edgewood.

Mother said, beaming, "You tell her, Henry."

Dad handed me the big box, explaining, "You see, Tobey, it's this way. Your mother and I felt you were entitled to a new dress for the dance, if for no other reason than the fact you didn't press us for one. Even parents are human, baby—and your mother remembers how she used to feel about school dances." He chuckled. "Besides, now that we've got only one daughter at home old enough to step out, we feel she ought to do the family proud."

I just stood there, staring at them sort of blankly, the box in my hands.

"Well, open it, dear." My mother laughed. "See what you think of it."

My fingers fumbled at the string and finally the box was open, the tissue paper turned back. It was the most absolutely swoony formal I'd ever had in my whole life—plaid taffeta in tones of violet and gold and black, with an off-the-shoulder neckline and a skirt so wide and rustling I couldn't even believe it! Any other time I would have been so happy and thrilled over a dress like that. Now, of all the dopey things, I began to cry.

"Why, Tobey!" Mother exclaimed. "Don't you like it?"

"It's just your size," Dad said earnestly, "but it can be changed if you don't care for the color."

I jumped up and threw my arms around both of them, one around each. Did any girl ever have such perfectly wonderful parents—or deserve them less?

I babbled, wiping my silly tears on the front of Dad's suit, "I love the color! It's the most absolutely terrif formal I ever saw. Th-that's why I'm crying—I'm so h-happy . . ."

WELL, the new dress was perfect on me. I modelled it a few minutes later and by that time I had myself under iron control. But inside I felt awful—ashamed and contrite and wicked. But there was nothing I could do but go on with the pretence I'd started about having a date with Jon Hayward. I was in far too deep now to back out.

Dad left early the next morning for Cleveland. Time simply crawled the next few days. I was so anxious to have the night of the Heart Hop come—and go!—that I could hardly stand it. I wanted to be finished with the whole dishonest business and forget I'd ever made up a boy named Jon Hayward.

I had a shampoo and hair-set and manicure at the beauty shop the day before the dance. It would have seemed queer if I'd refused when mother suggested it. With Dad away, Mother had more time to concentrate on me and honestly, when she spoke about Jon and the sort of evening we'd have and everything, I felt so guilty I could have died. By Saturday morning my wave had loosened up just right, so that my hair looked like a golden cloud, if I do say it myself. Mother wouldn't let me help with the dishes all day so I wouldn't spoil my manicure, and I felt terrible.

As soon as I was alone in the house for a single minute I was going to pretend to get a phone call from Jon, telling me he'd sprained his ankle and couldn't take me to the dance. But it seemed as though Mother would never go out. And, after lunch, when she finally had to do her marketing for the week-end, Midge had her pal Judy over and the two of them stuck to me like a pair of burrs.

We had a female sort of meal at dinner and by seven o'clock I still hadn't had a single chance to fake the phone call that would break my imaginary date. You can picture the state of mind I was in, with Mother insisting I start getting ready, or I'd be late, and Midge hanging around trying to be helpful. She got out my best slip and stockings and laid them carefully on my bed and even offered to put bath salts in the tub and run my bath for me.

Finally I couldn't think of another excuse for delay, so in desperation I started getting ready. What else could I do but let Mother and Midge think Jon had simply stood me up?

In spite of all I'd been through, I looked pretty super by the time I was dressed. Mother and Midge superintended the job and finally they stood back and regarded me with proud satisfaction.

Mother said wistfully, "I do think he should have sent you a corsage darling."

Midge said, "Maybe he'll bring it when he comes."

"If he doesn't," Mother frowned, "I'll feel it's inexcusably thoughtless of him."

"He's sort of the thoughtless type," I said, grasping at any straw that presented itself. "Very absent-minded. Why I wouldn't put it past him to forget about to-night."

"Why, Tobey," Mother gasped, "he couldn't do anything so dreadful!"

"You don't know Jon," I said faintly. "He's always forgetting things—quite important things sometimes—and—and you know, I've got the oddest hunch—"

Just then the doorbell chimed and Midge, who had been perched on my bed, practically tumbled off in her excitement.

"I'll go down, Tobey," she said, beaming expectantly. "It's prob'ly Jon."

I tried to say something, but my throat closed. I wanted to die. I felt so mean thinking how disappointed Mother was going to be.

I think in another second I'd have been weeping on her shoulder and confessing all. But then I heard Midge open the front door and a man's voice say something I couldn't quite catch.

And then Midge said, in that sort of high dramatic tone she sometimes puts on to impress strangers, "You must be Jon Hayward," and I wanted to die more than ever.

But a man's voice said, "Well, no. I'm not Jon, but Jon sent me. You see, he had the bad luck to sprain his ankle this afternoon. And rather than let your sister down entirely, he asked me to substitute for him."

"For pity's sake!" Mother exclaimed in whispered astonishment.

But she wasn't half as surprised as I. Jon had sent him, but there wasn't any Jon! My head was spinning. Who was that ancient sculptor who saw his statue come to life? I must be going mad.

My face probably reflected some of the turmoil going on within me. For Mother said solicitously, "Now, darling, it's too sad Jon hurt his ankle

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and couldn't come. But wasn't it nice of him to send someone in his place?"

Nice wasn't the word. It was miraculous! I opened my mouth but no words came out.

"And you said he was thoughtless," Mother went on reprovingly. "Why, I think he's very considerate!"

I gulped, "I never knew him to be so considerate before. It—really isn't like him. B-but I don't even know who that is down there!"

"Well, we'll just find out," Mother said soothingly. She slipped her hand under my elbow. "Come on, dear, we'll go down together."

It was like one of those ghastly nightmares where things happen that you know just can't happen—that is, it was like that until I got far enough down the stairway to see the young man Midge was talking to. Then I felt better, much better, though still confused. He was tall, with nice broad shoulders, and he had brown hair and blue eyes with a nice twinkle. Those were the first things I saw. Then I noticed that he was holding a little cellophane florist box and that it contained an orchid.

Dazedly I heard him go through his explanation again. He said that his name was Dick Allen. I kept looking at him, expecting him to fade away, but he stayed perfectly solid. Mother's eyes signalled to me that she liked him. I couldn't blame her, I liked him myself. Only how could he be there?

The next few minutes were something I never want to live through again. I finally found myself, my coat slung over my shoulders, going down our front walk with this—this ectoplasm. Mother and Midge stood in the lighted doorway behind us, so that there was nothing I could do until we were safely ensconced in the car towards which my mysterious escort propelled me.

Not until the door was shut did I let my breath out.

"Okay," I said, and my voice was pretty shaky, "let me into the secret now, so I can play games, too."

Dick Allen threw back his head and laughed. He had such a nice laugh that after a minute I found myself laughing, too. Or maybe I was having hysterics.

"I have never," Dick chuckled, "seen anything quite so blank as your face when you came downstairs and saw me. If I had been a ghost—"

"Aren't you?" I asked.

"Hum-uh," Dick denied. "But you certainly deserve an explanation. You must have thought you were dreaming."

"I still do," I told him.

"It's like this," Dick said. "Your kid sister and my kid sister are pals. Judy Allen—you know her, don't you?"

Light began to break through. I suppose his name would have struck me sooner if I hadn't been so dazed and confused by the whole unexpected turn of events.

"We haven't lived in Edgewood very long," Dick went on, "and I'm in my first year at college, so I haven't been around enough to meet you." There was a little note of regret in his tone, as though he really thought he'd missed something not meeting me sooner. I began to feel a faint glow.

"Well, it seems your little sister read in your diary about the jam she'd got you into with your boy-friend and what you planned to do about it. So she and Judy talked it all over and decided to fix things up."

My face felt hot with embarrassment. "Oh, they did, did they!"

"Don't be mad," Dick said. "I know how kid sisters are." I realised from his tone that we had much in common. "But this is one time I'm glad they stuck their little noses into something that was none of their business. Otherwise we wouldn't be here together."

I pointed out that there were still a few connecting links missing. "How did they get you back here from college?"

"That was easy," Dick said. "Judy wrote me an urgent letter suggesting I come home for the week-end. She also enclosed a snapshot of you that Midge had given her. So," his tone grew hopefully apologetic, "here I am. And I hope you won't hold any part of the kids' conniving against me."

I was glad it was too dark in the car for Dick to see me blushing.

I said, choky with embarrassment, "I—don't know what to say. I feel so—so silly!"

"Don't," Dick urged warmly. "Can't we just forget the whole thing and pretend there really was a guy named Jon who sprained his ankle?"

"Well—"

"Let's say he was a college friend of mine. So it was only natural he'd send me in his place."

DICK was so nice and understanding about the whole thing my embarrassment faded away. I began to look forward to the evening ahead. Of course, I didn't know Dick well enough yet to be able to tell whether I was going to like him as well as Brose. But I knew Brose well enough to know how he'd feel when he saw me with Dick, so handsome and assured and a college man. Brose would be fit to be tied!

"Okay," I said, laughing a little. "I never was very crazy about Jon."

"Atta girl," Dick said and started the car.

In many ways, I think it was the very nicest Heart Hop I had ever attended. For one thing my appearance with Dick created quite a furore among all my friends. I had to explain over and over about Jon having sprained his ankle and Dick substituting for him. Barbie and Kay and the rest of them could hardly wait to get me alone in the powder room to exclaim over how cute Dick was and how lucky I was.

"Imagine being disappointed by a guy named Jon without an 'h' in it and then having a perfectly super person like Dick turn up in his place!" Barbie sighed wonderingly.

And Kay added, "Nothing like that ever happens to me!"

"Your dress is so super, too!" Barbie exclaimed.

"And your orchid," Kay touched the lavender satin bow admiringly.

Barbie said, "I don't think Brose is having a bit of fun. Every time I've seen him he looks morbid. I don't think he likes Mary Andrews nearly as well as he does you, Tobey."

I shrugged. "He came to the Hop with her."

There was a bright glint of curiosity in Barbie's eyes as she asked, "Did he accept Mary's invitation before or after you asked Jon? I've wondered about that, Tobey."

"It was practically simultaneous," I sidestepped neatly. "But, anyway, don't you think it's a mistake for people to get into too much of a rut, to go with the same person to all the dances and things?"

Kay said doubtfully, "I don't know. You have more security, at least. But—maybe it isn't so exciting . . ."

We left it at that and proceeded to powder our noses and fix our mouths and go back to the dance floor. The orchestra was just beginning to play a rumba and Dick was waiting for me.

He was a really terrif dancer and yet, somehow, it wasn't the same as dancing with Brose. Dick is just as good looking as Brose, too, if not more so. And his line is a lot smoother and more sophisticated, although he isn't any wolf. By all the laws of reason and logic, I should have been perfectly happy to be at the Hop with Dick, instead of Brose. But I wasn't.

Dick said, as the music stopped, "By the way, Tobey, that fellow over there with the girl in green — he introduced himself while you were out fixing your face. Wanted to exchange dances on the next. Is that okay with you?"

My heart jumped. Mary Andrews was wearing green. I looked around in the direction Dick had indicated and sure enough it was Brose he was talking about. "Why—why, yes," I said. "That's okay . . ."

So the next dance Dick danced with Mary and I danced with Brose. Somehow, I felt very much at home in his arms. It was a nice warm feeling.

For quite a while we didn't say anything at all. Then Brose spoke. "Tobey—?"

"Yes?"

"Tobey, I must talk to you. Seriously."

"Well, go ahead."

"Not here," Brose said, "with all these millions of people around, bumping into us and hearing what we say and—and everything."

"Well, where then?"

"Outside," Brose said hopefully, his arm tightening a little around me.

But there would be people outside, too. Lots of people. There always were during dances. Besides, I had a better idea, much better. All I had to do was make Brose think he'd thought of it.

I shook my head. "Our dance is almost over. And it wouldn't be very polite to Dick—and Mary—if we went outside now and they didn't know where to find us."

"I don't care whether Mary ever finds me," Brose said morosely. "But—I suppose it's different with you and Dick."

"Dick is very sweet," I said. "Very polite and considerate. I certainly wouldn't want to do anything rude to him."

"But he isn't the one you asked to the Hop in the first place."

"No," I admitted. And then I added, because it is so much fun to torment Brose, "Jon is very sweet, too."

"Yeah," Brose said, getting out of step and landing on my toe. "Oh, I'm sorry, Tobey. But—all these guys—guys I didn't even know you knew—" He broke off to demand unhappily, "What's happened to us—to you and me, Tobey?"

"Has anything happened?"

Brose gulped. "We haven't had a date for two weeks—not since before Mary asked me to the dance."

"You haven't asked me for a date, have you?"

"Well—everything was such a mess. It still is! But — I figured once this dumb Heart Hop was over—why—we could get things straightened out between us again."

"Is that what you wanted to talk to me about?"

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"Sure, but you won't even go outside with me."

"Our dance is over now" I said as the music stopped and a smattering of applause broke out.

Thank goodness Dick and Mary were clear across the room from us. It would take several minutes for us to get together with all that crowd between. And maybe that would be time enough for me to plant an idea in Brose's mind, make him think it was his own idea.

I said, "Well, tonight isn't the end of the world. We can talk some other time."

"Tomorrow!" Brose exclaimed, fixing me with a stern look, his jaw jutting forward in a way I loved. "Or do you already have a date with Dick tomorrow—or Jon?"

I shook my head. "Not yet."

"Okay!" Brose's tone was almost violent and my heart pounded. I was so thrilled.

"What time tomorrow?" I inquired.

"As early as possible" Brose said. His eyes widened at a sudden idea—maybe it was mental telepathy or something. I'd been willing him to get the idea so hard. "Look—how about going on a bike hike with me? Will you, Tobey? It'd be just like old times."

Mary and Dick were almost with us, I noted through the corner of my eye, as I said quickly, "Okay, Brose. Tomorrow at eleven. I'll be ready . ."

Of course it would have to rain the next morning! But I put on my jeans and plaid flannel shirt anyway just in case.

As I went past Midge's room on my way down to breakfast, I heard sounds of her moving around, so I went in and shut the door firmly after me. She looked at me with a slightly scared expression.

"Did you—have fun, Tobey?"

I nodded. "But that doesn't mean it was okay for you and Judy to read my diary."

"I know," Midge said. "But—if we hadn't, you wouldn't have got to go to the Hop. And—Dick is cute, don't you think?"

"He is," I admitted, "but that still doesn't alter the—the ethics of the situation. Can't you understand that diaries are private?"

"But yours is so interesting, Tobey," Midge said.

My mouth wouldn't stay as stern as I wanted it to. I hoped I could keep my tone forbidding and severe. "If I ever catch you reading it again I'll skin you alive. But—uh—as you helped me out after you'd got me into a jam—well, if you look down in the refrigerator, there's something you can have."

"In the refrigerator?" Midge sounded mystified.

"My orchid," I told her. "It's practically as good as new."

Midge's eyes began to shine. "Gee, Tobey—that's wonderful! I never had an orchid before."

"Well you've got one now," I said and turned on my heel to march out before things began to get sticky.

Midge called after me in a penetrating whisper, "Gee, thanks, Tobey. And your secret's absolutely safe. Judy and I made a pact we'd never tell a soul—only Dick. And Judy swore him to absolute secrecy, too."

"Okay," I said. "okay. Let's forget it now."

Over breakfast, Mother and Midge had to hear all the details about the dance and whether I'd had fun and how I liked Dick. I didn't mind telling them about everything. I felt sort of warm inside despite my disappointment over the weather and almost happy.

And then, all of a sudden Midge exclaimed, "Look—the sun's out!"

And sure enough it was. So that made everything quite perfect, because it was still only ten, so Brose and I could have our bike hike and our serious talk after all!

We got under way a little while later. We had stowed not dogs and buns and potato chips and cokes and cookies in our bike baskets. Brose was wearing blue jeans and a plaid flannel shirt, too, and the sun felt warm across our shoulders and there was a nice fresh smell all around.

"It's as though it rained just especially to wash the world up all nice and clean for us," I said sniffing enjoyably.

Brose said, "Gosh, Tobey—" his voice sort of choked and he didn't go on.

But I knew what he meant. I felt the same way.

We pedalled out past Lake Ellen and took the gravelled road. I remembered so well from last winter. On New Year's it had been all hard packed and crunchy with snow. Now there were fields covered with corn stubble on either side and here and there a farmhouse with a big red barn behind and cows and pigs and an occasional horse browsing around.

It had grown warmer and the sky was as blue as I had ever seen it, with scarcely a cloud. So the weather had decided to co-operate after all.

Suddenly Brose exclaimed, "Look, Tobey—right over there. Remember that fence?"

I remembered it. Only a little of it had stuck up above the snowbank before. Of one accord we stopped our bikes and without another word being said we leaned them over at the edge of the ditch and went across and perched on the old weather-blackened top rail of the fence.

I asked as my shoulder settled comfortably against Brose's, "Is this where you were headed all the time?"

He nodded. "It's a good place for a talk. Don't you think so, Tobey?"

"We had a good talk here last New Year" I admitted.

BROSE said, "I think we ought to have another talk. Everything's been so—so mixed up lately, Tobey. I hate things all mixed up between us. I want them all nice and clear."

I said, "But it hasn't been my fault."

"Well—I guess it's been mostly mine."

"First Kentucky Jackson came between us."

"Let's not go so far back," Brose gulped. "Besides, she didn't really come between us. She was just a sort of—well, a mistake on my part."

"I forgave you for Kentucky," I admitted. "But then there was Mary Andrews."

"I don't care a hoot for Mary Andrews and you know it," Brose said. "I only said I'd take her to the Heart Hop because Midge told me you were out with someone else."

"And that wasn't even so," I said perversely.

"But you had asked someone else to the Hop," Brose accused. "Some drip you never even told me you knew!"

"Jon's no drip," I contented myself with saying. I wasn't going into all that at the moment although I might tell Brose the whole truth some time. "Besides, if you only brought me out here to blame me for everything—"

Brose's fingers closed around mine. "I didn't, Tobey. I'm not blaming you. It's just—well, gosh, I still like you better than any other girl. But I don't know how you feel about me any more. I don't know at all!"

He sounded so utterly miserable, I was thrilled. Besides, my heart felt all fluttery with him holding my hand so hard.

I said, "But I still like you, Brose. I still like you a lot."

"More than any other boy?" Brose asked. "The way you did at New Year's?"

I thought about it for a long minute, but it wasn't really necessary. I nodded. "More than any other boy I've met so far."

"But, gee!" Brose gasped, fumbling with his free hand in the pocket of his flannel shirt. "Gee, that's wonderful, Tobey. Then maybe you'll still wear this like you said you might."

He brought out something that glittered in the bright sunshine and held it out to me in the palm of his hand.

"Your class ring," I breathed. "Oh, Brose, I didn't realise you'd got it. It's beautiful."

I took it in my fingers and studied it, the gold circle with the Edgewood High School crest, the year of Brose's graduation.

He said, "I haven't even worn it yet. I was—saving it for you, Tobey, hoping you hadn't changed your mind."

"I haven't changed my mind, Brose," I said in a little breathless rush. "So long as it just means what we said, that we're best friends, that we like each other more than anyone we've met so far, that we hope that's the way it'll always be, but if it isn't—"

"Don't say any more," Brose stopped me. "That's what it means, Tobey. Can I put it on you?"

"Wait." I reached up and took a ribbon out of my hair, wrapped it around the inside of the ring. "I'll fix it with some thread or tape or something later, but this'll do for now."

When I'd finished I put out my right hand and Brose slipped the class ring on my finger. Then he did a very sweet thing. He lifted my hand to his face and laid his cheek against it for a minute and then he kissed my hand. No man had ever kissed my hand before in my whole entire life!

I felt all warm and soft and quivery inside and so happy I could scarcely breathe. It made me forget Dick and even Mary Andrews and Kentucky Jackson. At that moment it seemed as though Brose and I were the only two people in the world—and I liked feeling that way. I liked it very much indeed!

Apparently Brose was experiencing similar emotions. All he could say was, "Gee, Tobey—gee . . ."

We sat there on the old farm fence smiling at each other, with the sun pouring down over us and the sky so blue and everything smelling so wonderful and fresh. I wondered if there would ever be another day quite like this, so perfect in every detail, something to treasure and look back on.

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